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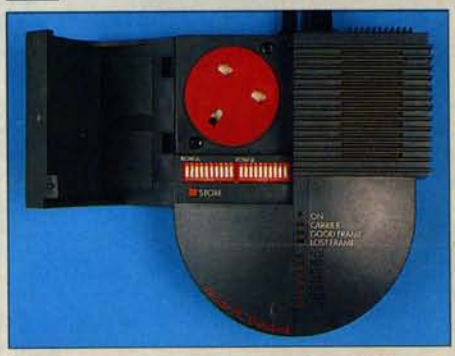

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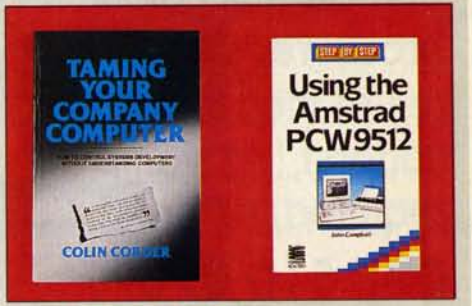

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More byte-sized chunks of information to digest

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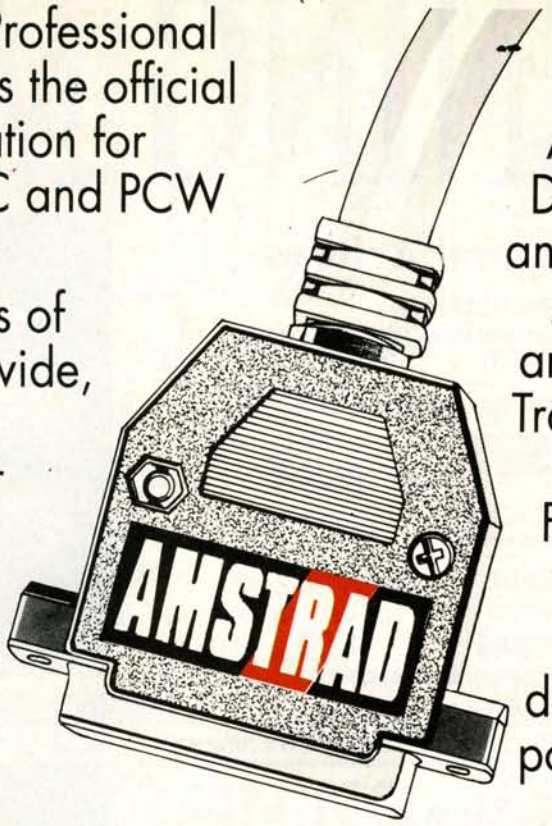

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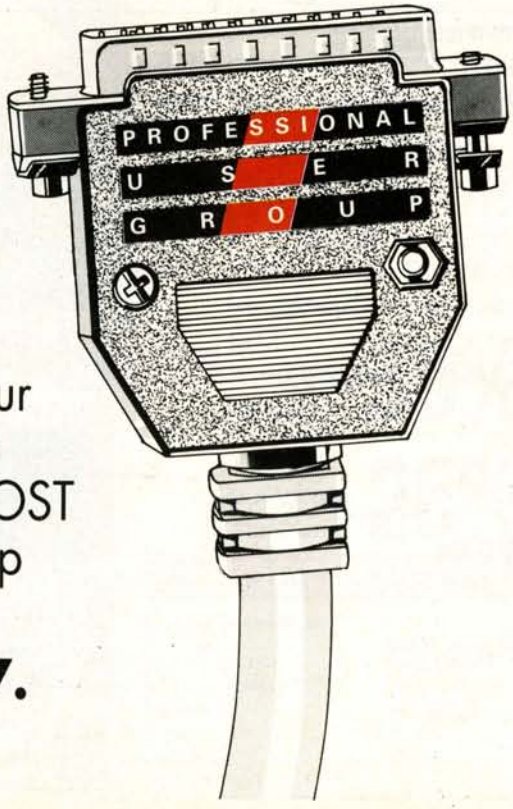

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Freedom of speech

The 8000 Plus mailbag is, as we all know by now, always a multi-faceted treat. Not only are the contributions we receive penned by an ever-widening spectrum of PCW-owners – housewives to university professors, students to doctors – the stamps they bear have an increasingly cosmopolitan feel about them.

Jaded, jet-lagged envelopes continue to arrive one after the other; the further away the better. Antipodean postmarks jostle with South American faxes for our attention. One reader went as far as to 'phone us from his New Zealand hideaway the other morning. To hear on a cold, grey, windy winter morning that it was, at that very moment, a beautiful, balmy evening in Christchurch, that he had just 'emerged' from his evening constitutional – 10 lengths of his garden pool – and was just about to go to bed, turned us all a rather interesting shade of green. Before he went, however, could we help him with his latest PCW query?

The European PCW-owning contingent is equally vociferous in its support of the machine and 8000 Plus. Conservative industry estimates put the number of PCWs busy at work in Europe alone as something like 700, 000 plus. Postcards from France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and further up, Denmark, Sweden and Norway regularly swell the ranks of our 8000 Plus competition entries.

One thing is certainly clear: the PCW is no small-fry machine restricted to operating within UK confines. And companies like Apex Computing Services, whose language-learning programs for business are featured on this month's cover, look set to push back the barriers even further by offering new, confidence-boosting ways of inter-European communication for you and your PCW. This is the decade of the Single Market; the PCW is determined not to be left out. Make sure you're not too.

Sharon

Revelations

How do you dove-tail two uses for the PCW and create a truly powerful new idea? A few years ago there were quite a few books-on-disc for the PCW. Literature ranging from basic Karl Marx to the Just-So stories could be bought. Those days are gone it seems. People found reading from books so much easier on the eyes – and it's difficult to snuggle down into the quilt clutching a 9512.

This seems to be a shame bearing in mind the various utilities available on your PCW. For example you could find your favourite extract at the flip of a FIND/EXCHANGE key, and then save those astute observations as phrases.

Another article which has gained some interest in 8000 Plus of late is the Bible or rather the Bible on disc. Advantage Software already provide a PCW version of the 'good book' and now a new version (on disc at least) is available.

A company called Bible Society Software has produced the 'Good News New Testament and Concordance' for the PCW. This product goes by the name of Bibliotec and aims to provide more than mere scrolling pages, highlighted commandments and eye-strain.

The company claim several miraculous advantages for this new piece of software. For example, it is "unique because unlike other computerised Bible study systems, which are merely character recognition programs, it it can distinguish meanings of words, eg. 'cross the lake' is differentiated from 'cross of Jesus', and group all similar words eg. sing, sang, sung."

This is indeed an advance on other systems and is exactly the kind of attention to detail which has been missing from the book-on-disc market. The occurrences of words can also be mapped in the form of bar graphs and data can be stored for later use.

Along with the disc itself comes an 80 page manual and ring binder. The company are also affiliated to the Bible Society of Scotland so there should be no worries about bad service.

Not only does this look like a boon for all those people who would like to study the Bible in depth, it hopefully opens doors for other ventures. The Torah, Talmud, Koran, Veda, or any book – sacred or not – which needs to be studied could benefit from this kind of system.

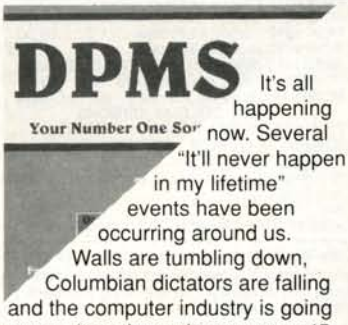
For more information on Bibliotec contact Bible Society Software, at the Bible Society of Scotland on 031 337 9701.

A newly computerised Bible for the PCW. But there's more than just a good book here.

NEWS

by Tim Smith

Green for a day



It's all happening now. Several "It'll never happen in my lifetime" events have been occurring around us. Walls are tumbling down, Columbian dictators are falling and the computer industry is going green, (see the review on page 45 for more news). A company called DPMS (DP Media Services) recently sent us a catalogue entitled "The Green Issue".

Although the majority of products are IBM PC orientated there are some rich pickings for the PCW user within its pages. Ribbons for the Star LC10 and 8000 series printers, (on re-cycled fabric perchance), screen cleaning sachets, a variety of of 9 and 24-pin dot matrix printers, RS232c connectors and various other items of value. Prices don't seem to be that different from anywhere else – it's just that there is so much of the stuff to be had.

The Green angle appears to be a slight bandwagon-jump but there you go. If you would like to find out more about the products available you should contact DPMS on 0734 814171.

Good techniques

Thurston Techniques have been long-time stalwarts of the PCW world. Their range of Tempdiscs and other handy devices have eased the life of many a user over the years. So it's always good to receive news of the latest product from this company.

Tempdisc 9 is now out on the streets, or rather the drives, and this time it's PCW9512 owners who will be gaining the benefit of Brian Thurston's knowledge. Each of the Tempdiscs have contained innumerable tips and new angles for LocoScript users. The new disc brings Headers and Footers, Stock Layouts, daisywheel pitch comparisons, a calendar and ... much, much more. Tempdisc 8.2 was priced at £19.95 so we would assume that number 9 will be around the same price. We hope to be reviewing some of the Thurston Techniques' products in the very near future. To get more information or even a Tempdisc you should call Brian Thurston on 0395 277496.

Out for the account (i)

Derek Rogers Professional Software of Glasgow have brought out a new accounting package called Total Accounts. The DRPS press release informs us that the package provides the following; "It was specifically designed for ease of use: all data is checked on entry, all screens are presented in similar ways with uniform data-entry formats and error-messages. The user can always exit from any menu or process."

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purchase and nominal ledgers; space for up to 998 customers/suppliers, 998 nominal accounts, 999 transactions. It comes with a 60 page manual. The list of attributes goes on and on ... profit and loss account cleared at year-end and year-end profit posted to a balance sheet.

The system has been developed over 8 years because Derek himself decided "...it was time for something sensible on the Amstrad PCW and this is straight-down-the-middle-of-the-road accounting."

John Major and the rest of the team have plans for you but two acccounts packages might help

According to the Amstrad Professional User Group, Total Accounting is 'astounding'. We have not looked over the system as yet but hope to in the near future. If you would like to get your hands on Total Accounting you should have £84.50 to hand and the following number in the little black book 041 334 8902.

Out for the account (ii)

Digita International seem to have found out what is in this year's Budget even before John Major. The latest press release for their popular Personal Tax planner tells us ,"With the implementation of this year's Budget, we face the most profound changes in personal taxation – including separate legislation." They tell us this to remind everyone that the Tax Planner is still with us. It has been updated since last year's Budget and costs £39.95. If you would like to contact the company, you should phone them on 0395 270273.

A sound education

Westwind Computer Education Centre are based in Wellington (Shropshire not New Zealand). They have been in the business of educating PCW users in many aspects of the macine such as LocoScript, Mini-Office, SuperCalc and Protext among others. But recently a new idea occurred to Peter Wright, the head of the business.

He has decided to offer courses in C programming. For those people who think that programming entails switching from BBC1 to Channel 4, the C programming language has long been touted as the sexiest way to make your computer work for you. Without a doubt C has become the flavour of the last few years.

There are several different forms of C (as there are Ford Cortinas) and the one which Westwind have chosen to use is Mix C. This is a popular and powerful version of the language. Peter Wright tells us that, in the opinion of the company, "The courses will be ideal for any person who wishes to program seriously." Just to preempt people who live in Penzance or Perth, we are also informed, "Distance from Wellington need not be a problem, we will be happy to run courses at weekends or on working days and arrange guest-house accommodation if there is sufficient interest."

Peter has been programming for some years and founded the company in 1988.

The courses range in price from £10.00 per evening – over a sixteen week period – if you live locally, to a flexible timetable beginning at £300. In the light of some other training establishments this offers

CLUB NEWS

Remote control

Last month we reported that a new Bulletin Board Service (BBS) had been set up in Scotland. Called Remote! PCW it is run by Nigel Hill, the Night Picture Editor on the Glasgow Herald newspaper.

With those resources to hand, Nigel was able to let us have several excellent pictures of himself and the sight of Remote! PCW. Below, we've included a couple of log-on screens just to show you what's in store.

If you have any information about a club or society using PCWs or any other PCW-related news, please get in contact with Club News at the following address: Club News, 8000 Plus, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2AP.

Nigel Hill the system operator (SYSOP) for Remote! PCW in the wilds of Scotland and the wilds(ish) themselves

The Windsor change

The Windsor Bulletin Board User's Group has been with us for some time now and has been growing steadily. The handy point to note about WBBug (as they call themselves) is that you can live in Kenya and still take part.

They make use of three CD ROMs – like the audio disc but used to store read only information in huge quantities. This means that a user will be able to down-load files from one of these CDs at a hefty rate of knots. For example, one of these CD ROMs alone contains 7000 public domain programs.

The annual subscription to WBBug will set you back £5.00 for a full year. This will get you access to the bulletin board itself (of course you'll need a modem and comms software) as well as a quarterly newsletter and monthly social meetings – if you can make them – at Old Windsor.

You are cordially invited to have a quick look at the system by using the following number and procedures: 0753-868196 [8-n-1]. For a full system directory you should look in the file area called Login.

To get details about membership you can use the same number and leave a message or write to Peter Catley (using what they call Snail-mail) at 11 Haslemere Road, Windsor, berkshire, SL4 5ET.

Psion copped

Sitting here at Club News HQ we sometimes pause to think. Last month was obviously not one of those times. Back then we gave plenty of time and space to the Hereford Amstrad User Group (HAG) and their new service to Psion Organiser users.

As a brief resumé, HAG will download files from PCW disc to Psion Datapak – saving you the time and the money. What we didn't get round to mentioning was the telephone number and address.

Before we get into those details however, here's some news about meetings. These occur on the first Wednesday of every month at 18 Church Street. They begin at 7pm and go on until everyone decides to finish (or last orders are called?). Each meeting concerns itself with fairly detailed examinations of relevant aspects of PCW software – products ranging from LocoScript to Mini-Office are included and guest speakers are often invited along. Many non-technical PCW users will be pleased to hear that interesting written information is provided – the last we heard HAG were working on a short introduction to CP/M. The March meeting will include a talk by Bob Ellis on the pleasures and perils of Public Domain. And the really good news ... there is no subscription to pay!

It all sounds like a friendly, informative and eventually valuable organisation if you're in the area. And that's the news ...

Fooled you

Oh, the Hereford Amstrad User Group can be contacted via David Rose at 18 Church Street, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 2LR. If you really can't wait, you can call David on 0432 267123 – but remember he's a busy man.

fairly reasonable value for money.

Obviously, not having attended any of the courses we can't comment on the quality of the training given. If you would like to know more, then phone Peter Wright on 0952 56573

Doctor who?

Dave - the disc doctor - Smith. Both he and Dave Axford show the human face of computing.

A few months ago we published an interview with Dave 'the disc doctor' Smith. This was combined with the news that he and Dave Axford (another long-time PCW devotee) had pooled their resources in order to rescue data from damaged discs. In the interview we published a number for Dave Smith ... and thereby hangs a tale.

Firstly, however we will reiterate the services which both Daves offer. If you have a disc which has thrown up a missing address mark message, has been masticated by the pooch or fallen into the river, and you also have valuable information on that disc then you are unlucky. If you have backed-up that disc then you are less unlucky and quite astute. If, on the other hand you have neglected to take such precautions – you are not only unlucky, you are also unprepared. Your only real chance of salvation in this case are the Daves Smith and Axford.

For a donation to charity these two gentlemen will do their utmost to rescue your work and return it to you in as good a nick as they can. The charities supported by the Daves include BACUP (a group which looks after cancer victims and their families) and the M E Association (for sufferers of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis).

So, where does the tale hang? Well, the phone number we gave in the Dave Smith interview had two digits counter-placed. The number we gave was actually that of a Mrs Haffenden, and all of us at 8000 would like to offer our thanks for that lady's good humour and patience. She had to field several phone-calls relating to damaged discs and did so with great aplomb.

The correct number for Dave Smith is 089 283 5974. Again, thanks to Mrs Haffenden for all her help.

Beep yourself even fitter

An interesting looking note popped onto the News Plus doormat this month. A product called Discover is about to hit your screens. Aimed at the following market, "Amstrad PCW/ Health/New Age/Therapy" and produced by Morris Berg.

Discover tell us that Mr Berg is a psychology graduate and psychotherapist and that the program itself is a 'Resource Dossier on LocoScript Format 3" Discs'. What it appears to do is provide information on several areas of care and health awareness. Subjects covered include Therapy Centres, Spiritual Paths, Ecology and Environment, Professional and Research contacts in the USA, as well as plethora of other interesting data.

Heralded as "Your gateway to a network of thousands of contacts", the discs looked packed with information (400k on two discs). Although we have not seen the product as yet, we hope to in the near future. For some more information you should contact Discover on 01 552 9744 (you'll probably get an answer-phone).

Da-da Da-da!

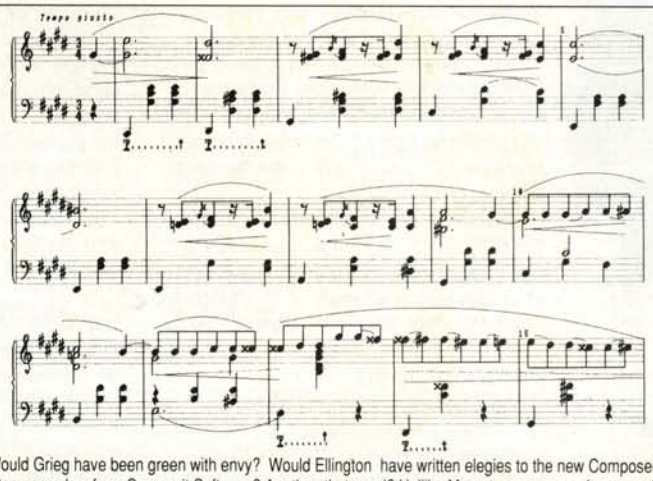
An excellent piece of news for all those budding Bachs among you. Two new versions of the – by now classic – Composer's Pen from Composit Software is due for release. Called Composer's Pen II and Composer's Pen 24 they are said to offer additions to the already successful Composer's Pen (I).

Composer's Pen II not only includes all the features of its forebear but also includes a new piece of programming by Mike Baker which is said to increase what had previously been the rather jagged quality of 9-pin dot matrix print-outs by 50% (how they grade these things is beyond News Plus). In theory at least this will make the printouts of clefs, diagonal and curved lines easier on the eye – a vital consideration for any sight-reading musician who can't stop to fathom out a strange-looking hieroglyph in the middle of a bar.

Composer's Pen 24 will actually produce some really impressive print-outs using a 24-pin printer. If you are already using the original version, Composit will let you have the 24-pin driver to add to this – which is very good of them indeed.

Both packages feature up to 99 staves, cut and paste music, text and standard music symbols, printing of scores and parts of scores, up to 20 note chords, seven clefs, a transposition facility, full control of note and stave spacing, and the mysterious beaming and flagging, as well as a manual written by a musician. Not a programmer please note – which means there's a very good chance it will make sense to the people actually who use the program.

The two packages cost £74.75 (for Composer's Pen II) and £89.95 (for Composer's Pen 24). To find out more, or even to order, call 0952 595436 – or write to Composit Software at the following address; 10 Leasowe Green, Lightmoor Village, Telford, TF4 3QX.



Would Grieg have been green with envy? Would Ellington have written elegies to the new Composer's Pen upgrades from Composit Software? Are they that good? Unlike Mozart you can see for yourself.

SNIPPETS

Lapcrush computer

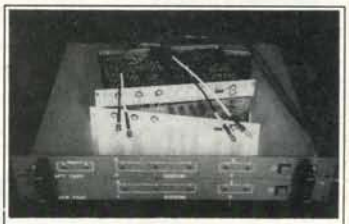
This must surely be an early April Fool's joke, sent to us by Panasonic who are not normally known for their sense of fun. Their new CF-150 laptop computer is said, by them, to be 'the ultimate personal organiser'. It fits in your briefcase, costs £861 and is touted as being portable. The punchline ... it weighs 61lbs. The consensus in the office is that we would prefer to carry round a highly intelligent five year old and save on the batteries.

Fame!

Over the last few months the PCW has been seen on the Russ Abbott show (as a visual display unit), in Dennis Potter's seminal Bleurghh Eyes and more recently in A Sense of Guilt with Trevor – don't mention Shoestring – Eve. Where will it crop up next we ask ourselves? Even more importantly, have you spotted a PCW anywhere of interest? If so, write in and tell Snippets. Even better still, send pictures. We'll make our machine the most famous in the world yet!!

Waste-a-tree prize

This month's utterly useless press release picture prize goes to a company called Barco with the contraption you see below. It is supposed to handle RGB signals, what are they? What use are they to the PCW world? Answers on a grain of rice please.



If Heath Robinson were alive today, he might appreciate this device.

Right premise

Caspell Computers, who have been supplying the PCW with goods and services for many years, are expanding with new premises in Poole. They have set up a new sales centre at the Sterte Industrial Estate in their home town. This is excellent news for both the company and PCW users alike. You will probably be most aware of them via their Ribbon Refresh can of spray-on life-giver to the PCW printer. So, congratulations to Caspell and may they stay with us for many years yet.

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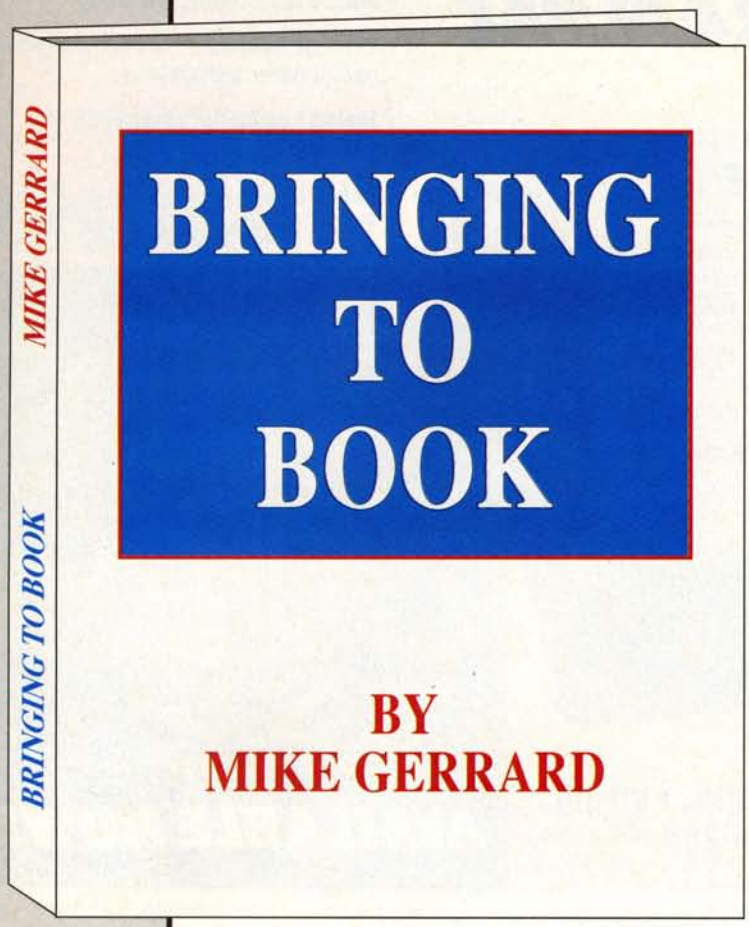


BRINGING TO BOOK

BY MIKE GERRARD

Be your own publisher! Writing your chef d'oeuvre is half the story; author Mike Gerrard shows you how to market what's rightfully yours

Hello, Good buy

The intrepid adventurers behind Your Sinclair will shortly be uprooting from London to continue the magazine's production here in Bath - as a Future Publishing title.

We all know the PCW is a much-maligned machine – though have you noticed it's only by people who don't actually use one? First launched with the slogan that it was "More than just a word-processor, for less than the cost of a typewriter", it has fully justified that claim. It is the ideal writer's tool, there's no doubt: but why stop at writing? With a PCW on your desk, primed with your favourite word processing software and with a decent spreadsheet to hand, you can easily publish your own book — hardback or paperback. I know because I've just done it.

Publishing might seem a daunting prospect, a skill shrouded in mystery that is full of technical problems and pitfalls for the unwary. I've a strong suspicion, though, that this is only what the publishers would like writers to believe. It's actually a very simple process. You send sheets of paper to your printers, and they send you a book in return. The writer and the printer do all the work in creating the book. The publisher's skill comes in selling and marketing the end result, fully justifying author Timothy Mo's recent description of a publisher as being no more than a used-car salesman with a plum in his mouth. So if you think you can manage to sell your own book — why not cut out the publisher altogether and do it yourself?

My own book came about because I found myself in a position whereby I could reach a lot of potential readers without incurring much expense. I write the adventure section in a magazine called *Your Sinclair*, which does for the Spectrum computer what *8000 Plus* does for the Amstrad PCW — each one being the best and best-selling title in its own particular field.

For the last few years I've been getting over 100 letters every month from readers, all of them asking me questions about adventure games, some of them asking me if I'd ever written a book about them, and, most important of all, virtually every one enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. I've written books in the past for 'real' publishers, and I realised that if I did publish a book myself, I could reach a large number of potential readers without incurring the major expense of advertising.

Cover charge

Having decided that the book would be 128 pages long, and that I'd print 500 copies to see how it went, the spreadsheet allowed me to see the hidden expenses mounting up, as well as quickly incorporating costs I'd forgotten. I realised at one point that while I'd included the cost of the postage for sending each copy out, I hadn't actually allowed for an envelope to put them in. I soon realised that unless I was going to stick the stamp on the book itself, I'd better include 10p a time for a sturdy envelope.

The spreadsheet had two main virtues, though. One was to be able to juggle with the cover price, and instantly see the overall effect of different amounts on my figures. Setting the cover price is in fact one of the hardest things to do (writing the book was a doddle in comparison) as it doesn't bear any direct relation to the costs involved.

If you're hoping to sell your book in the shops, a general rule is to work out the unit cost per book and treble it to get the cover price. That might seem a remarkably high mark-up, but a retail outlet may insist on a trade discount of anything up to 50%. So if the book costs you £2 to produce, and you think you're being wildly capitalistic in charging £3.95 for it, bear in mind that a shop may only be prepared to pay you £1.95 per copy. This is what's known as bad business — for you, that is.

A more realistic cover price would be £5.95, meaning you collect about £2.95 per copy from the shop. They still make more money out of it than you will, but at least you'll be able to sell a few more copies and won't have to turn the business away for the embarrassing reason of having mis-priced the book.

In my own case, as I was planning to do everything mail-order and had no intention of touting my book round the local computer shops, it was a question of whether to charge £3.95 or £4.95. Given that I had no idea how many, if any, I would sell, and that producing the book would involve me in a capital investment of about £1,000, not even allowing for my own time, I was naturally inclined to charge the higher price on the grounds that, as my friendly spreadsheet told me, I'd break even sooner: after selling 205 rather than 257 copies, in fact.

But (and this is the kind of convoluted thinking book pricing lets you in for) would I lose more than 52 sales by charging the extra £1? Not even time can tell you that, although one thought I kept in mind was that if you start at a

higher price you can always come down later, but if you under-charge from the start you could be on a loser.

What you get is what you see

Having decided on a cover price, and assuming there is a market you can aim at, if you think you can make a go of selling the book — go ahead. But don't start writing it until you've made a few more decisions. It's vital to sort out what the book is eventually going to look like, and how you're going to produce what the printer wants, which is camera-ready copy (CRC).

I'd opted for the easiest A5 size paperback format, although Antony Rowe will print you a hardback just as easily if you wish. But a printer can only work from the material presented to him. If your art-work or print quality is cheap, the results will look cheap.

In fact I opted for the cheapest and easiest way of all, which was using the Amstrad's own dot-matrix printer to produce my CRC. Shrieks of horror from the professionals no doubt, but in all honesty the results aren't that bad if you take care, and in the end, of course, a book is only as good as it needs to be.

If money's no object to you then by all means pay to have it professionally typeset. It does look infinitely better than dot-matrix output, but it will cost you a fortune, about £4 per page. That's an extra £500 on your budget for a 128-page book.

Second-best is to have it laser-printed, and there are now several firms who will laser-print a LocoScript file for you, or an ASCII file on a 3" disc, at a cost of about £1 to £1.50 per page. Easiest and cheapest by far, however, is to do it yourself on the printer you've got.

I'm not saying that you can ignore quality altogether, that would be treating potential readers with disdain, on the grounds that if they don't see it before they've bought it then it doesn't matter how cheaply it's produced. This is not the attitude at all.

On print-ciple

My own book should have been printed out on a 24-pin printer, specially bought for the purpose. Well, to be more truthful, that was my excuse for buying it. But just when I'd finished the writing and was all ready for the massive printing-out stage, the edge-connector at the back of my PCW went on the blink and the interface wouldn't acknowledge the presence of an alien printer.

My own belief is that it was sulking. "After five years of use," it was saying, "here's the most important job I've ever been asked to do and he wants to use a different printer. I'll show him.". And it showed me by refusing to drive the new printer, which meant that I had to resort to my original plan of using the Amstrad's own.

I had already experimented with different pitches and page layouts, with and without bold and double commands to darken the print, and decided that the best results were obtained by ignoring bold and double, which tended to thicken the letters a little too much, and to use the 12-pitch rather than more obvious 10-pitch. I say 'more obvious' because the best quality comes from reducing the size of your original print-out from A4 to A5 in a photocopier, and the larger 10-pitch might seem to be the natural choice to give slightly larger end results. However, to my eye this produces a text that gains width at the expense of height, and just doesn't look right.

Most important factor of all, though, is a large supply of new printer ribbons. I laid in a stock of two dozen ribbons, and changed to a new one after every five or six pages. This gave a consistently good ink colour, the density of which improves when the size is reduced. The ribbons aren't wasted, of course, as they are then used up in more normal circumstances.

What's the damage?

The most important factor of all is budgetting. In order to see whether publishing my own book was feasible or a recipe for economic disaster, I had to get a few quotes from printers – once I knew roughly what size of publication I wanted. I'd fortunately come across a book which I would recommend to anyone remotely interested in the subject of publishing, and that's the Small Press Yearbook.

It recommended several printers who do books in small runs – which means anything from 100 copies upwards, including the company that actually printed the Yearbook itself. I eventually used this company for my own book: Antony Rowe Ltd. I chose them not because they gave the cheapest quote (in fact most of the quotes were similar) but because they seemed the most efficient and I had the benefit of seeing a book they'd actually printed. One printer would only give me a verbal quote, whereas Antony Rowe sent a full written quote, along with a costings leaflet for every imaginable combination of size of book and print-run, plus samples of the various types of paper that could be used.

The leaflet enabled me to go to town on the budget, and to discover the wonders of the spreadsheet. I had heard people enthuse wildly over the spreadsheet program, so much so that I began to doubt their sanity. It was as if, given a choice between an evening with a spreadsheet and an evening with Darryl Hannah, they'd be pushed to make a decision. Now that I've spent such an evening (with the spreadsheet, that is), I can see that it is indeed a pretty spiffing program.

I used the Spreadsheet Module of the Mini Office suite (pre-debacle version). This had many advantages, not least being the fact that it was the only spreadsheet I owned. In conjunction with 8000 Plus' very own mini-series on how to get the best out of the program, it did everything I needed, and my desk was soon covered with print-outs of the various options available.

For further information

Antony Rowe Ltd, Bumper's Farm, Bristol Road, Chippenham, Wilts SN14 6QA (0249-659706)

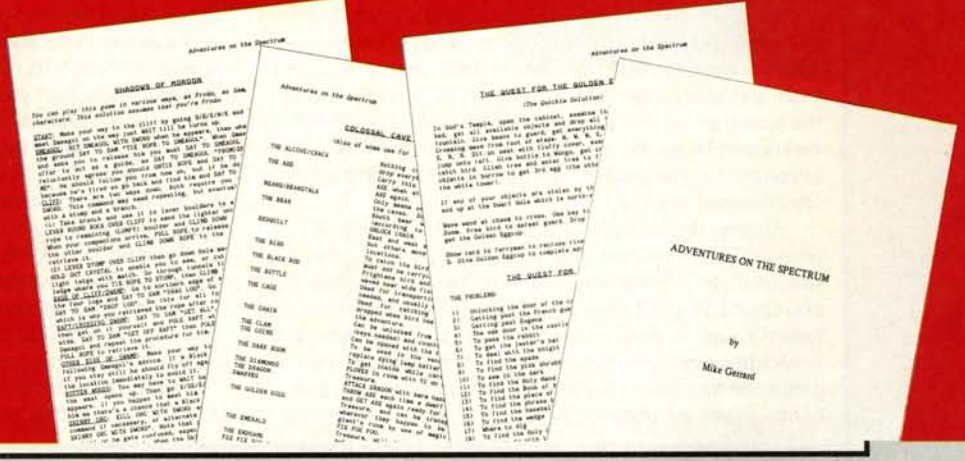
The Small Press Yearbook 1990 costs £5.99 from the Small Press Group, BM Bozo, London WC1N 3XX
The phone number for further information is 0234-211606

Thameslink offer laser and typesetting services for the PCW: 38 Thames Street, Windsor, Berks SL4 1PR (0753-863356)

Adventures on the Spectrum costs £4.95 plus 5p towards postage from Mike Gerrard, PO Box 7, Ramsey, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE17 2UZ

Mike's book is entitled Adventures on the Spectrum and costs £4.95. It is, he says, the book that 'no Spectrum-owning adventure lover can afford to be without.'

It contains information about adventure clubs, fanzines, how to write and sell your own adventures, how to crack them - and so on.



Order and despatch

Keeping a check on sales is also a job that the Amstrad can be made to do without effort, thanks to good old LocoFile, one of my favourite PCW programs of all time. When the orders arrive once a week from the PO Box I took out (get a form from your post office: £80 per annum for one delivery a week, or £40 if you collect them yourself), I go into my production line routine.

Number the cheques and the orders, add up the cheques, enter the total in my cash book, then enter the names and addresses into LocoFile, which not only keeps a record of them in case of queries, it also prints out the address labels for me. Orders received on a Saturday are posted back on the Monday. They could even go out the same day if the village where I live had a Saturday lunchtime collection.

I don't wait for the cheques to clear – in fact they're often not banked till the following Saturday, and none of them has bounced yet. A friend who runs his own software mail-order business told me that in four years of operation he hasn't yet had a duff cheque, so it hardly seems worth losing sleep over.

On the legal side, you have 28 days to deliver the goods from when you receive the order, so there's plenty of room for maneouvre. Even if you go on holiday for a fortnight, you should still be able to meet your obligations. Allow for a delay of about six weeks from sending the finished pages to your printer to receiving the books back again.

I started sending out leaflets about a week before the printers told me the book would be ready, which dovetailed nicely. The book was just two days late from the date originally quoted to me six weeks earlier, which I thought was quite impressive, especially as the printer phoned me beforehand to let me know about it. One thing to watch out for: the printer will want paying in advance, unless you're an established customer, so don't bank on paying him out of the sale proceeds. It's your risk, not his!

Reduction by photocopier is also important: don't forget that you are supplying the printer with that camera-ready copy. He cannot produce an A5 book from A4 sheets. The pages you give to him have to be just as they are going to appear in the finished book. Some printers will no doubt offer to do the reduction for you, but don't assume that they will, or that if they do it will be cheap — it's almost certainly better to shop around and get it done elsewhere.

Diminished state

I was lucky in having a friend with a copier that will reduce pages in size, but any High Street Prontaprint or equivalent should be able to do it for you. A tip here is to get two copies done while you're at it. It only costs a few pence a sheet and you may as well have two copies while your A4 pages are in pristine condition. Accidents happen even to the most conscientious printers and it's nice to have an original as well as those A5 copies which will certainly get damaged in the fullness of time.

The book was written using LocoScript. I normally prefer the speed of Protext for lengthy documents, but in this case I liked the way LocoScript handles headers and footers, and there was also some material I wanted to incorporate into the book that had already been written under LocoScript, so that helped in my choice. Either would do really. The important thing is to make sure you have made the right choice before you start.

Another option might be to use the Micro Design 2 program, which accepts most word processor files and can also print out on either 24-pin or laser printers. Alternatively you could use it to create the original pages in the A5 format (which saves on photocopying bills), and choose a more acceptable font size. When reduced from A4 to A5, word processor font sizes tend to be smaller than is ideal, and better results are obtained from a 14 or even 16-point font (not to be confused with LocoScript's 15 or 17-pitch. Fonts get smaller as pitch sizes get bigger). However, Micro Design 2 wasn't released until I was part-way through writing my book so it wasn't an option open to me.

Paint your palette

Although you can do the bulk of a book with a word-processing rather than desktop publishing program, it is useful to have one of these for one or two things. I wanted to do the covers of the book on the 24-pin printer, but because of the edge-connector problems I had to be unfaithful to the PCW and use a desktop publishing program on the Atari ST, which was prepared to recognise the existence of the printer. I used the same set-up to produce a leaflet cum order form, although I could just as easily have used the Amstrad. My choice of Atari over Amstrad for this was dictated purely by a piece of suitable clip-art that I found.

In general terms, though the Atari is undoubtedly a faster micro, the PCW has much more clip-art at its disposal thanks to the range of Newsdesk International discs and the likes of companies like Dragonfly Designs, so it's perfectly able to produce leaflets, advertising matter and whatever else you want to use.

I opted for a simple black type on white background for the cover, on the grounds that it was the cheapest and also easiest, being entirely under my control. Antony Rowe Ltd produced the cover plates for me, from three separate sheets that I did on my own printer, for front, back and spine. If I'd been bolder I'd have got a friend to do some art-work for the front of the book, but I was feeling very cautious about this first attempt at publishing. Also, each extra colour you want on the cover adds considerably to the cost.

Leaflets are not only easy but cheap to produce. I designed an A4 leaflet, reduced it to A5, put two A5 copies on one A4 sheet and produced 1000 leaflets for the cost of 500: about £25. I mailed some of them out to people I thought might be interested in the book, and the response rate made it well worth doing. The remaining leaflets were handed to friends and retained for stuffing in the stamped addressed envelopes that come my way over the next few months, at which point I'll get some more printed if the book looks like selling out.

Protecting what's yours

There are a few other bits and pieces you need to know, but nothing that need put you off publishing, and all are covered and appropriate addresses are given in the Small Press Yearbook. The ISBN (International Standard Book Number) that you see on most books is only necessary if your book is headed for shops and libraries. If in doubt, get one for your book. It won't cost you anything for a single ISBN. You can also get a bar code for the back of your book if you like, but again it's only helpful if your book is in the shops.

You should send one copy of your book to the British Library, but if you don't deposit one with them then the law isn't going to come crashing down on your head. The Library is years behind in its cataloguing, and also running out of storage space, so if you think future civilisations can live without your Guide to East Anglian Ferrets then you may be doing them a favour by not sending one in.

And that's it. You've produced your book, done it all on the PCW, and no doubt felt the same glow of pride that I did when the boxes arrived from the printer and I picked up the first pristine copy — after worrying for weeks about what it would look like, it was only then I realised how simple the whole process had been. If you're printing 5,000 copies make sure you've got somewhere to store them; 500 can be stored in the average cupboard.

All you have to do then, is sell them. Not even your Amstrad can do that for you — though it can certainly help. ■

Make it worth your while

I wasn't interested in making vast profits out of the book, as I very quickly realised that it was going to be more of a labour of love than a means to an early retirement in the South of France, but I at least hoped to make a few bob. The time you have to put into producing a book is enormous, and unless you sell a few thousand you'd probably be better off standing in the street selling matches.

In addition to the time spent writing, I'm here to tell you that it takes forever to do all the little things: buying stamps, sticking them on the envelopes, recording your sales, labelling the envelopes, hauling them round to the post office, paying in lots of little cheques to the bank ... My own bank insists on stamping each cheque and writing the account number on the back of each one. Paying in an average week's sales took me so long I could have written another book while I was waiting.

A New Powerful Combination for your PCW8256/8512

LocoFile with LocoMail

LocoFile is a pop-up database that organises and maintains everything from names and addresses to books and sales orders. From data stored and sorted on your LocoFile cards, LocoMail lets you create reports, letters and labels.

Together they make a powerful combination to use with LocoScript 2.

All this for £49.90 - giving you a £10 saving on the individual price of LocoFile and LocoMail

Please send me the following:

LocoFile & LocoMail **£49.90** ☐

Please send me details of the LocoScript 2 family ☐

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____ Postcode _____

Note: All prices include VAT and UK postage

☐ I enclose a cheque for TOTAL£ .....

☐ Please charge my Access/Visa card

EXP Date

Signed _____

Send to Katy Buchan at:

LOCOMOTIVE SOFTWARE
Dorking,
Surrey, RH4 1YL
TEL 0306 740606

MASTERING MASTERFILE

If you want to get the best out of the best PCW database on the market, enter here! Part 1 of a complete guide ...

Let's assume you want to keep some sort of name-address-and-details list – on the members of the club you run for farmers with rare pig breeds, for example.

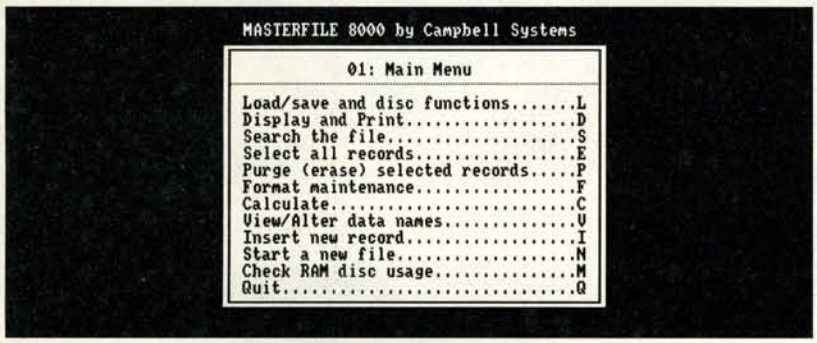
First you have to decide exactly what sort of information you want to store for each person – as if you were designing a form for them to fill in when they join. A database must be set out in this tabular sort of way. Of course you need name and address; you need to keep a record of the yearly subs because you have a three-tier membership system (£5 a year individual, £10 family, £25 business, say); and other information.

Here's what a typical form might look like if filled in by a member – from now on we'll call this information a 'record':

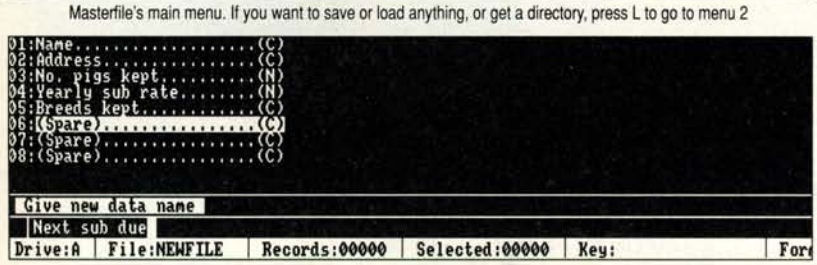
Name Harold Boggis
Address High Leas Farm, Linford Christie, Hampshire SO9 7JE
No. pigs kept 2,000
Yearly subs £10
Breeds kept Tamworth, Gloucester Old Spot, Oxford Sandy & Black
Date sub due 3rd April 1990

Understanding CND

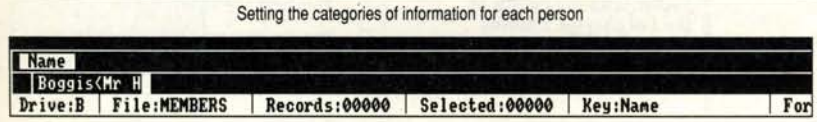
Most items in a database will be C for character. Numbers, type N, can have calculations performed on them, and dates, type D, can be sorted into date order (rather than alphabetical order, which would put April before March!). Phone numbers may as well go in character, as you won't want to do any calculations on them, and you can then have phone numbers like '01 867 6657 ext. 526' which Masterfile wouldn't allow as a number.



Masterfile's main menu. If you want to save or load anything, or get a directory, press L to go to menu 2



Setting the categories of information for each person



Surname shuffle: enter a name like this and it will display properly but be sorted under surname, not first name. Note how the drive has been changed – it was A before, now it's B

Here are some of the things Masterfile will be able to do for you if you keep the above information on each person. You can obtain automatic totals of the number of pigs kept by all your members or totals of subs you should receive each year; you can produce lists of your members in order of pig population; you can produce lists of members whose sub is due and send letters automatically to them, asking for the right sub rate; you can produce lists of members who keep particular breeds of pig; and so on.

And it's all at the touch of a button – well, a few buttons – and done for you on screen or printout, or even 'exported' as a file that you can polish up with LocoScript, adding bold and italic and fancy type styles and layouts.

Getting started

But first you want to know how to go about setting all this up. Start up CP/M as usual and at the A> type **MF8000**[RETURN] and press any key at the opening message, which gets up the opening menu. You'll be returning to this menu a lot when you use Masterfile.

You want to start a new file, so press [N]. Up comes the message **Is this file to be keyed?** – press [Y]. A keyed file is one where the PCW 'remembers' each set of details by one of the items listed – usually the name. So the machine 'thinks' in terms of 'Mr Boggis's details' or 'Mr Smith's details'. If you can think of a sensible use for an unkeyed file you shouldn't be reading this.

Next it asks you **How many data names** – that is, how many sections there are on your notional form. There are six, but before you press that, it would be an idea to leave a couple of items spare in case you think of something you want to add for each person later. (It's not a disaster if you don't, actually). You may as well give **8**[ENTER] as the answer.

Up on screen come 8 items in the top left, none named yet. Masterfile is going to ask you what each is to be called and what sort of information you want. Now, the first item you give will be the keyed one, and the various records in the file will be displayed ordered by this item. 'Name' seems the obvious one.

Spare items

You don't have to move the cursor to select the first one, just press the 'grid' key with the 2 on it near the bottom right of the keyboard to **Alter** the item. You're prompted to **Give data name**. Type **Name**[RETURN]; you're now asked what sort of information will go in this slot – **Character, Numeric or Date**? The names will be text, of course; you won't want to find the square root of them or look up the day after Mr Smith, so press **C** for character.

Now you see **01 Name.....(C)** on screen showing Masterfile has received your message.

Now we must input the address, which is to be item 2. Move the cursor down to item 2, press the grid key to 'alter' the title, and give **Address** as the data name. This is also **C**. For the third item, move down with the cursors to item 3, give the name as **No. pigs kept** but give **N** as the type – this will enable you to do calculations on the data in this bit later on. Repeat for item 4 (**Yearly sub rate**, **N**) item 5 (**Breeds kept**, **C**) and item 6 (**Next sub due**, **D**). Leave the last two undefined.

Surname shuffle

If you make any mistakes, you can go back and change the title or type of any item by moving with the cursors and pressing the grid key to alter them.

Now you want to save what you've set up before you go any further. **X** to the main menu; you now press **L** to go to the menu with **Load/ save and disc functions** on it.

If you have an 8512 and you want to work with the file on the B drive – as you should – then first press [D] (menu 2) to change the drive you're working on, shown as **A** in the lower left corner. Press [B] and you see the **A** change to **B**. Then carry on – from now until you switch off everything will be done to and from the B drive.

Now press [S] to save the file and give an appropriate name, say **MEMBERS**. The disc whirrs and the message **Done** pops up. The line at the bottom alters – it shows the name of the loaded file as **MEMBERS**, and gives the key as **Name**. It also shows zero records and zero of them selected, because you haven't input any information yet – which is what you do now.

Press [X] to get back to the main menu; you want to input each person's details now, one by one. Press [I] for **Insert new record**; you see the headings appear – name, address etc.

Now, when you input a name, you can use a feature of Masterfile called 'surname shuffle'. This gets round the fact that names are sorted by surname, not first name, so that Zoe Angell should come before Benjamin Zephaniah, but that it looks horribly regimentary if you list people as 'Angell, Zoe'.

First things last

When you type in Harold Boggis's name, type it in like this:
Boggis<Mr H

When you press [ENTER] you see that the name displays as **Mr H Boggis** which is better – but Masterfile will sort the entry under Boggis, making it appear in the right place in a name list.

There are other uses for this feature – **Messiah<The** in your music catalogue, or **Air That I Breathe<All I need is** in your Hollies record collection.

There's another neat trick with the address. Enter Mr B's as follows:
High Leas Farm_Linford Christie_Hampshire_SO9 7JE
(the _ is [SHIFT] hyphen).

When you come to print out the address, or display it on screen, in a square shape such as a label, it will display as this:
High Leas Farm
Linford Christie
Hampshire
SO9 7JE

Whereas if you are confining it to a long line, it will display as:
High Leas Farm Linford Christie Hampshire SO9 7JE
– this gets round the problems posed by putting each line of the address as a separate item – **Address 1, Address 2** and so on, which you would otherwise have to do if you wanted a label-style printout.

For numbers, such as subs due, any £ sign you type is ignored: **'£10'** becomes simply **'10.00'**.

The date must always be entered as
3 Apr 90
– that is, no 'rd' after the 3, and no '19'. It displays as
03 Apr 90

If Masterfile beeps and displays something in a different form, you've misentered. Change the date to the right form.

If at first you don't succeed

If you want to change something you've entered, use the right and left cursors to highlight the item to change, then press the grid key, enter the new details, and [ENTER].

Press I again and insert another record and continue until you've entered them all, or it's time to go to bed!
Note how the figure by 'Records' at the bottom tells you how many names and addresses you've entered in total.

Before you switch off, save the file by [X]-ing to the main menu, [L]-ing to the 'save' menu, and pressing [S] to save – after that just [ENTER]. To re-load – to add new names, perhaps – take **L** from the main menu, **L** from the next and give **MEMBERS** as the file to load (changing drive if required).

Entering a new name is easy – just insert, using I from the main menu, and save the altered file. (Masterfile prompts you to save a file before you leave if you've changed it).

To see the various names, press **D** for Display from the main menu. You'll see the first name, alphabetically, displayed on screen. Keep pressing [ENTER] and you'll move through the list alphabetically – Masterfile has arranged everything in order of the 'key' field, the first one you entered, which is the **Name**. To move back one, press [ALT] and the up cursor. To move back to the beginning, press [B].

If you want to change any of the details – perhaps someone has moved or started keeping different breeds, or you just made a mistake – just get the right record up on screen and use the left and right cursors to move to the item to change. Press the grid key and enter the new information; Masterfile automatically re-sorts the file if necessary. To erase a file – if a member leaves – get that one displayed and press [ALT]**E**. Remember to save before you leave Masterfile, of course.

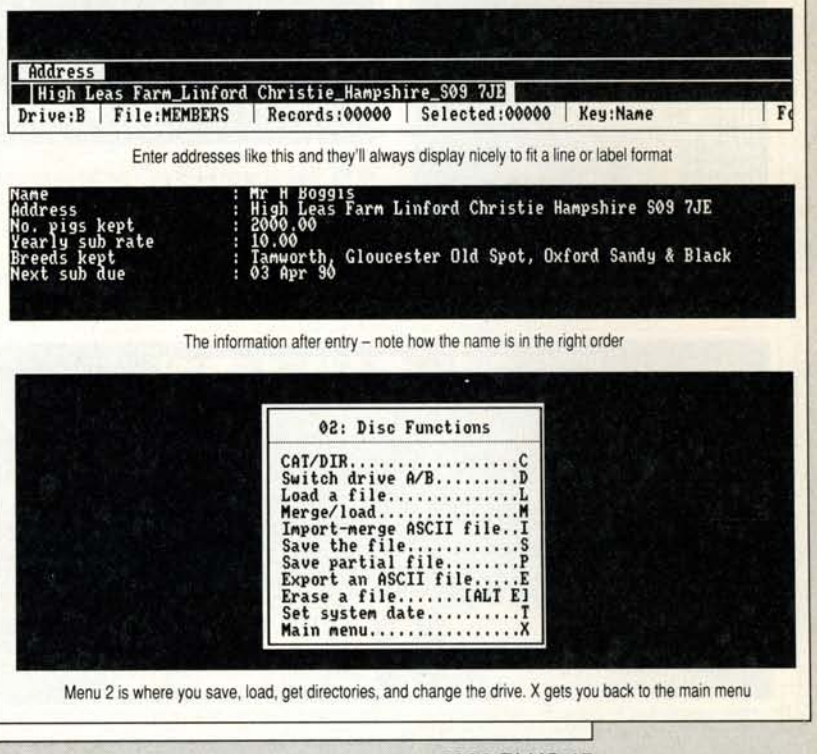
Now you can start to manipulate the data you've entered; the hard part is over. Next month the fun begins ... ■

Ordering, problems with

In many countries the surname comes before the given name: Japan's Prime Minister is Kaifu Toshiki, son of Mr and Mrs Kaifu and the Hungarian composer was called Bartok Bela for example. China and Korea are the same. Masterfile does not sell many copies in the Far East however.

Insert overwrite here

If you want to edit a line you're typing in, you can swap between insert and overwrite modes – in which new text is respectively inserted between or overwrites existing text – by pressing the up or down cursor. If you want to work in the same way that LocoScript does, by inserting, then press the up cursor. A little arrow appears in the window to the left showing that you're in insert mode.



Enter addresses like this and they'll always display nicely to fit a line or label format

The information after entry – note how the name is in the right order

Menu 2 is where you save, load, get directories, and change the drive. X gets you back to the main menu

MAKING HEADLINES

Brian Holley reviews the upgraded headline program from ORB Systems

PS HEADINGS

£11.95 ● ORB SYSTEMS ● 01 690 8534

Protext users who regularly produce news letters, information sheets, menus or who simply want personal letter heads will certainly be able to put PS Headings to good use. If you are daunted by the complexities of desktop publishing, but want a simple tool to produce high quality large print, PS Headings is for you. This little program first appeared about a year and a half ago, complete with a well-written user manual. It has now been extensively improved and provides the updated manual on disc.

The major improvement is in speed. The version one manual advised users to go and make a cup of tea while processing takes place. No time for that now. The new version makes use of compressed BASIC to create the file from which the headline is produced in a Protext document.

Headings may be up to 9 lines long. The width of the heading will depend on whether double or quadruple-size characters are used. PS Headings allows the use of extra characters and accents so that some decorative effects can be achieved. It is also possible to set the distance between lines in a multi-line heading.

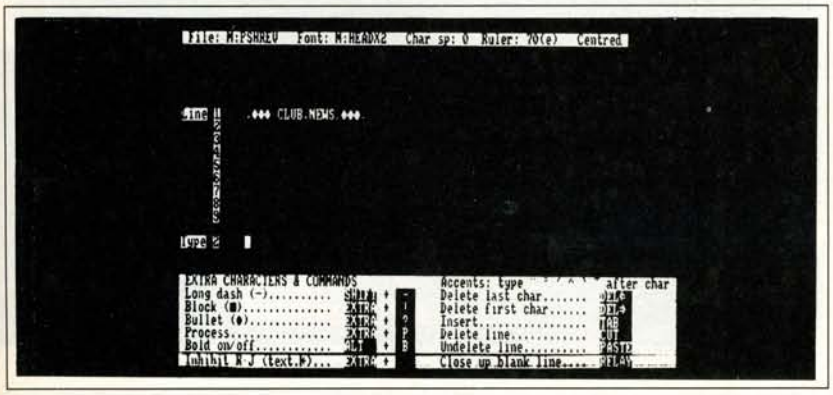
The font is fixed when creating the file that contains the font size, character spacing, ruler length and centering information. Styling information, such as shaded background, inverse printing (white on a black background), underlining, proportional spacing and triple strike printing are all set in the document using Protext **>sv** commands. The print quality that can be achieved using the triple strike option has to be seen to be believed. This is especially effective when using a carbon ribbon in the printer.

Creating the file from which the heading will be printed is very straight forward. You can actually operate the program with minimal reference to the manual because most of the elements are presented in an easily understood manner. On most prompts, a default is offered and all you need to do is press [RETURN]. The main processing screen shows 9 blank slots into which the heading can be entered.

Left: PS Headings never leaves you in the dark; the program reports its every move while setting itself up

Above: The first stage in processing a heading: setting the style and defaults

Below: The second stage in processing a heading: inputting the heading itself



Printing

The manual states clearly how to enter the appropriate instructions in a Protext document. These are Protext set variable commands (**>sv=**) that only affect the headings themselves. By measuring from the left edge of the paper in either imperial or metric, you can place any heading in any position you want to very precisely. This, and the Left Offset (**>sv lo=**) set variable enable you to produce headings with columns giving a good magazine layout effect.

Once a heading file has been created, the document can be viewed on screen with inverse blocks where the headings will appear. If necessary, the heading file can be edited using the main menu **Process** option and pressing [PASTE] when asked if you want to create a new file or alter an old one. So that you can check what is in a file, PS Headings provides a **View data file** option which puts the information on the screen.

PS Headings has much to commend it. It is relatively easy to use, has a cleverly written manual, provides a good range of desirable features for producing good quality documents and comes at a very affordable price.■

PS HEADINGS

PLUSES	MINUSES
▲ Easy to use	▼ Limited to one font in two sizes
▲ Range of styles	
▲ Good manual	

PERFORMANCES	4/5	RANGE OF FEATURES	3/5
EASE OF USE	4/5	DOCUMENTATION	4/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 16/20

LocoFont

Give your PCW some style

MODERN: After disconnecting the mains power...

OLD ENGLISH: The Old Antiques Shop, 27 The Square, West Street

PENMAN: *It seems ages since I last wrote to you - and longer since we met...*

ROMAN: The minutes of the meeting were accepted...

SANS SERIF: Taking this as our hypothesis, we can...

SCRIPT: We're glad to hear that you enjoyed the surprise party...

STANDARD: Please find enclosed confirmation of your order...

CAPITAL: FOR SALE: MINI 1000 - GOOD LITTLE RUNNER...

COPPERPLATE: You are invited to a housewarming party...

DECO:
Avacado Pear with prawns

DEFINITE: We have been forced to adopt a tougher approach...

FINESSE: The fête this year will be held on the 10th June...

MINI 15/17: This package is supplied on the terms shown below...

Mini PS: A word processor provides a facility to create documents...

Please send me the following for LocoScript 2:

LocoFont for the PCW8256/8512 Printer

Set 1 – Standard, Sans Serif, Roman, Script, Copper Plate, Deco, Definite, Capitals, Finesse and Modern	£19.95 ☐
Set 2 – Standard, Sans Serif, Penman, Old English, Mini 15/17 and Mini PS	£14.95 ☐
Set 1 and Set 2 together	£29.95 ☐

LocoFont 24 for the 24 Pin Dot Matrix Printer

Text Set – Roman, Definite, Capitals, Finesse and Mini PS	£24.95 ☐
Display Set – Penman, Old English, Deco, Script and Copper Plate	£24.95 ☐
To use LocoFont 24 you need the 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc	£24.95 ☐

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

Postcode_____

Note: All prices include VAT and UK postage

☐ I enclose a cheque for TOTAL£.....

☐ Please charge my Access/Visa card EXP Date

Signed _____

Send to Katy Buchan at:

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TEL 0306 740606

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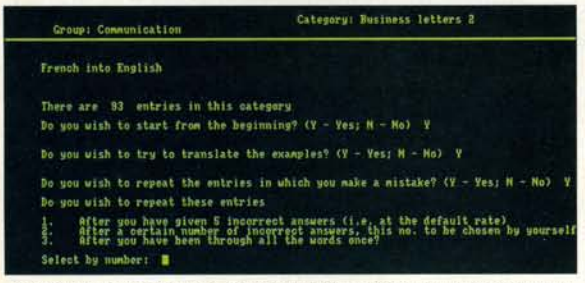
When I'm calling you

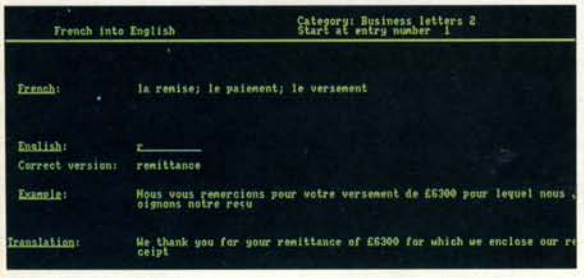
Most business situations will require you to use formal language; for that reason, the four programs we looked at use the polite Vous, Sie and so on to translate the word 'you.'

The British, as a nation, are not renowned for their enthusiastic, brook-no-obstacles approach to learning foreign languages. We usually fall into the trap of assuming, somewhat glibly, that no matter how distant the shores to which we are travelling, there will always be someone there wielding a positively archaic edition of Fowler's Correct Usage. We might make the half-joking concession of throwing a phrase-book into our suitcase along with the Ambre Solaire and latest Harold Robbins bestseller, but knowing how to communicate the fact – distressing though it undoubtedly is – that your toilet is blocked and you need a plumber is of limited use.

The neat clear screen display of each program's opening menu. The 47 vocabulary groupings are divided among six subject categories: Business, Technical, Travel, Restaurant, Communications and Social.



Once you've selected the vocab grouping you're interested in, you will be faced with a number of questions: which way you want to translate (into or out of the language in question), where you want to start and whether you want to try the sentences too



It's a shame about that clumsy word-wrapping, though. If words have to break mid-syllable, you would expect to see the odd hyphen in evidence; not really that good going from a program that is trying to promote linguistic precision

Four language-learning packages from Apex Computing Services, however, are destined to change all that. Designed and written specifically for business and other professional personnel, it's likely that all those PCW owners for whom the dawning of the 1992 single market actually means something will soon be sitting up and taking notice. Between them, Apex's language-learning programs cover the four most widely-spoken languages in Europe today: French, German, Italian and Spanish. But, as we've mentioned, the packages are different from any other computer-based language-learning aids in that they have all been written with a particular kind of user in mind – someone who will need to use and understand these languages on a professional, day to day basis.

Rather than having to sit through barrages of perfectly-enunciated English on the part of your European associates, feeling oddly inadequate and faintly apologetic, these programs, in theory, will allow you to turn the tables on them and give back a little of what you get.

Each of the four discs that we received conforms to an identical format: this consists of 47 data files (or, to be more precise, vocabulary groupings) which are, in turn, divided into six categories: Business, Technical, Travel, Restaurant, Communications or Social.

Between them, the categories cover a number of very wide-ranging topics: exports and shipping, retail and wholesale, matter and its forms (this one's more like a chemistry lesson), to name but a few. The subject matter is also identical from disc to disc. On each disc, there's a file consisting exclusively of phrases which can be used at various social occasions just to help you weave your way that little bit more confidently around in the impenetrable fog of continental etiquette. In fact two of the most useful files of all show you how to loosely construct a formal business letter in the language concerned – always a potential minefield of social bloopers for the uninitiated.

What's on the menu?

Finding your way around each of the programs couldn't be easier. Once Business French, say, has been loaded, you will be presented with a clear, easy-to-use menu which displays a number of alternative courses of action. From here you can either proceed into the main body of the program, begin creating your own vocabulary groupings, or leave the program completely.

The first option involves selecting first, the category, then the vocabulary grouping within that category that you're interested in. Let's assume that you want to know how to compose a French business letter, for example. The file containing the vocabulary that you're interested in is located under the "Business" category heading.

Once you select and open the file in question, you will discover that it contains a number of entries – probably about thirty or so. Each one consists of four different elements. First, the English (or French) word or phrase. Second, its French (or English) translation. Third, a commonly-used sentence in English (or French) in which the word you've just learnt has been included, and, finally, a translation of the sentence. You have to provide parts two and four.

Rather like a bi-lingual dictionary, the program can be used in two ways. You can instruct it to lead you in either English or French (or German, Spanish or Italian for that matter). Selecting the former option means that the program will place the English words and phrases on your screen so that you translate them into French. As well as

providing the most testing way of doing things for English speakers this dual lead facility makes the programs an equally attractive proposition for the continental user.

Freedom of speech

Before you begin translating, the program will ask you a number of questions, the first being the one we've just mentioned: English to French or French to English? Then you will be politely asked, whether you want to work your way through the file from the beginning or from some point (which you determine by typing in the entry number) in the middle.

You may have made a start on the same file numerous times in the past, but never got beyond a certain point – maybe through lack of time. Rather than starting from square one all over again, you can choose to begin working from, say, entry 15. The word that is introduced in that entry will be displayed on the screen. At this point, you can either confirm your starting point or key in another entry number.

Translating the sentence that accompanies the word being introduced is not mandatory, but it's probably going to be in your best interests to give it a bash. These sentences will provide you with the practice you're undoubtedly going to need in using the word you've just learnt in an intelligent – and often quite specific – context.

They will also supply you with the opportunity of using other words in the category and perfecting various grammatical constructions. Learning how to syntactically construct a question in a foreign language, for example, is one of the most valuable lessons you can learn and one that Apex are obviously well aware of.

The program will then ask you if you want it to repeat those entries that you translate incorrectly as a sort of revision exercise. This ensures that you don't leave a file until you translate all the entries correctly.

Time after time

You can choose at what point you want these revision entries to reappear. You can tackle them as you go along, for example, or wait until you get to the end of the file. Again, the last option will probably prove the most effective in the long run simply because it will stretch you more. Either way, you decide how many wrong answers you are going to allow yourself before the program repeats the problematic entry.

The program's default setting will allow you up to five incorrect answers before the question is repeated, although, depending on how hard you want to be with yourself, you can alter this number to anything between two and nine.

The entries that are proving difficult for you will continue to be repeated in sequence until you translate one of the words correctly. If you are revising as you work your way through, new words will be introduced until you get one wrong again. This entry will then join the pool (hopefully, not too big) of those words that you have yet to answer properly.

Each word in the chosen file appears at the top of the screen and you are prompted to provide its translation. When you're happy with what you've typed in, press the [RETURN] key. If your answer is the right one, the program will, at this point, move onto the example sentence. If it's wrong, you will see an on-screen prompt consisting of the first letter of the correct translation and a line which indicates roughly the length of the word to be typed in.

Once you've keyed in your new answer and pressed [RETURN] for the second time, one of two things will happen. Either the program will replace your second wrong attempt with the correct answer, or the program will move on to display an example sentence which contains the word that you have just translated. You then try again.

The pedants revolt

It's usually at this point in the procedings that some of the program's less attractive features begin to rear their ugly heads. For example, it isn't very long before you find that it is impossible to type in an entire translation of the sentence in one go – because the program monitors each word as you finish typing it in. This means as soon as you have keyed in a word you must, as usual, hit the space bar to move along.

Just about now, the program will invariably inform you that the word you have just typed in is wrong and will send you back to the beginning, supplying you with its first letter and the line to give a rough indication of its length. If your second attempt is also wrong, the correct word will appear when you press the space bar. You must go from word to word like this until you have typed an exact translation of the sentence.

There is always more than one way of translating a sentence, no matter how basic it is. But because of the limited memory of the PCW, the program will only ever accept one answer. If you enter "Have you got ... ?" instead of "Do you have ... ?",the program will judge your entire entry incorrect. Knowing that it is the computer that is wrong is small consolation and it can become very tedious and frustrating .

Sometimes the user is asked to translate sentences that are quite long; invariably when this happens, some extremely shoddy wrapping can be seen on the screen. Sentences that wrap mid-word without any evidence of hyphens are not ideal in a language-learning package that is supposedly the very model of linguistic precision. Besides which it does rather spoil the presentation of a package that – in most other respects – has a polished and professional feel. ■

The right accent

Once you've loaded SETKEYS with the program disc (as per the instructions in the manual) you will be able to reproduce – easily – any of the accents required by the four languages. In Business French, for example, simply press [ALT] and [E] together to get the letter è with a grave on it.

Not for beginners

The subject matter covered by these language-learning packages is wide-ranging and practical. It must be stressed, however, that a complete beginner will get very little out of them since translation exercises are all that the programs offer.

Ideally, the successful user of Business French, German, Italian or Spanish will already be acquainted with much of the vocabulary that the files contain. They may already have heard them in use; what these packages will do is help them transfer the words, together with their translations, from the passive memory (in which the user merely recognises the word if it is heard or seen again) into active and accurate recall (so that they can be remembered, located and, what's more, used in the appropriate context).

The more inexperienced conversationalists could have benefited from a cassette to be used in conjuction with the software. Not only would this have provided a vital aid to pronunciation and intonation, it would also have enabled a more portable language-learning system.

Indeed, Apex obviously spotted this chink in their armour when they designed and wrote their language-learning programs; eagle-eyed perusals of the manuals reveal on page 3 'A cassette is also available with this package.' When we eagerly asked Apex to supply us with one, Vincent Besborough revealed that the cassettes had been put on the company's back-burner for a while.

Don't bank on these packages transforming you overnight into a multi-talented interpreter of positively United Nations status. It just won't happen. What they will allow you to do is add to, consolidate and place in some sort of context the vocabulary and phrasing that you have picked up.

DIY dictionary

A major bonus as far as these business language-learning packages are concerned is the ease with which you can create and amend your own files. This is a facility which would come in particularly handy if you wanted to store a category of words and phrases which you would use regularly in a specialised context.

Again, this 'create your own' facility couldn't be easier to use; having followed the on-screen prompts, you will be requested to key in the individual entries, supplying first the English word, then underneath its appropriate translation. As with the supplied categories, you can also put together your own example sentences since both English and French/German/Italian/Spanish entries can contain a maximum of one hundred characters.

Any vocabulary groups that you create yourself can be amended in three different ways: existing entries can be edited, new entries can be inserted and old entries can be deleted. All you have to do is follow the simple, step-by-step instructions that appear on the screen. In fact it's probably fair to say that at no stage should you have to consult the manuals in order to operate these packages; all the key presses that you will ever need to know about at a given stage are already displayed on the screen.

The overall presentation of the packages is very classy indeed. Glossy, typo-free manuals and professionally-packaged discs provide a glowing example that many other software houses could do worse than to try and follow.

BUSINESS LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

PLUSES
- ▲ Fun and easy to use
- ▲ Only useful for the ex-beginner

MINUSES
- ▼ Programs need cassettes to be really good
- ▼ Some sloppy screen displays

USEFULNESS 3/5 DOCUMENTATION 5/5 EASE OF USE 5/5
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 13/15

STOCK EXCHANGE

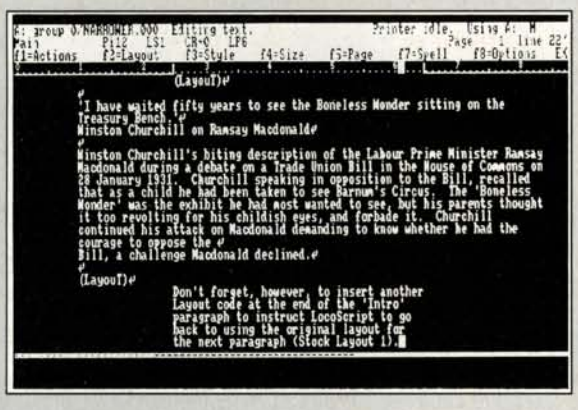
Your current LocoScript layout may be a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. On the other hand, Sharon Bradley shows you how to edit it the easy way

LocoScript 2

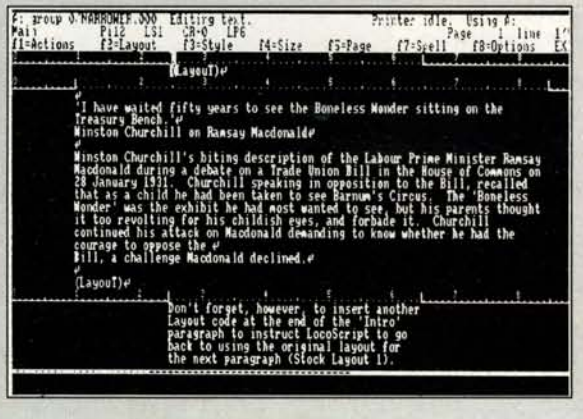
1) Press [f2] then choose **New layout** to get into LocoScript 2's Layout Editor. Once you've designed your new layout, pull down the [f7] Name menu and type in an appropriate label for it – in this case, **Table 1**.

2) The [f5] Stock Layout menu on display. Place the cursor at the appropriate point in the document and take your pick.

3) The document reflowed with its 'imported' **Intro** layout at the top. Don't forget to return to the original **Main** layout afterwards.



4) Displaying the different layouts in one document. Open the [f8] Options menu and choose **Rulers**; a Ruler line above each paragraph where there has been a change of layout will show you everything you need to know: tabs, margins, the lot!



Consistently pulling off stunning ways of organising the information on your LocoScript pages is all very well. But just how flexible are the respective Layout editors of LocoScript 1 and 2? It would be unreasonable to suppose that you are always going to be happy with the way you've arranged your margins, tabs and tables in your document the first time round; after all, they're potentially tricky parameters to set at the best of times and it's important that the program you use to produce them is flexible, fast and friendly.

LocoScript 2: Naming the layout

If you are using several different layouts in the course of one document, sometimes it can be helpful to name them. Not surprisingly, it is going to be in your best interests to choose a name that will remind you in the future of the particular task that they are performing. Once inside LocoScript 2's Layout Editor ([f2], then **New layout**), design your layout as normal. Before pressing [EXIT] which you would do to leave the Editor, pull down the [f7] Name menu.

Let's assume that you have just 'fixed' the series of tabs required to construct a table. It might seem appropriate to call it **Table 1** – which you type in just as if it was a filename. The difference is that you can use upper and lower case characters, spaces, hyphens, Greek letters and some accented characters. Press [EXIT] then [ENTER] to return to the document.

Same again

As with LocoScript 1, you can use a certain layout more than once in the same document. LocoScript 2, however, offers a slightly more sophisticated way of doing this than scrolling through the document in search of the correct Layout number to enter.

As we've pointed out earlier on in our LocoScript series, all the information about a certain layout is held in its distinctive **LayouT** code. To use that layout somewhere else, make a copy of the code, store it as a LocoScript block and paste it back into the document at the appropriate point.

To copy, place the cursor in the space before the opening bracket of the code and press [COPY]. Then move the cursor to the space following the closing bracket of the same code, pressing [COPY] again. The program will then prompt you for the number of the Block in which the layout will be stored; start with 0 if it's available. Then scroll your way to the point in the document from which you want the layout to take effect and press [PASTE]. Again, you will be prompted for the Block number, so enter **0**. The code – complete with all its effects – will be successfully transferred.

Calling on the reserves

Meanwhile, editing a layout couldn't be easier in LocoScript 2. Simply open the document in question, press [f2] to open the Layout menu and select – you've guessed it – **Change layout**. The program will take you straight into the Layout editor again. All you have to do is work your way along the ruler line, clearing and/or refixing new margins and tabs with the help of the appropriate menus: [f1] for Margins and [f3] for Tabs. If the positioning or type of one of the tabs in a table, say, isn't quite

right, just **Clear** it and start again. It's as simple as that.

If you've got a particularly long and involved document on your hands, it's likely that you're going to want to use a series of different layouts in the course of putting it together. We've already looked at one way of reintroducing an old layout at a later stage in the same document; but it's not ideal if you have to do it more than a couple of times. There is, however, a quicker way.

Made to measure layouts

LocoScript 2 provides you with a set of layouts which you can then go on to use as patterns or templates for new ones. To call these layouts ready-prepared would be misleading. You have to do all the initial hard work yourself, that is, setting them up through **Document setup** and giving them a name. They're likely to be the layouts that you use the most often, however, so it's well worth it. We'll be looking at the setting up of these layouts next month; for the time being we're concentrating on why you need them and how to use them.

Each stock layout – and there are ten of them available per document – can define two rulerline positions for left and right margins, a character size, line spacing, as many tab positions as you want – and so on. **Stock Layout 0**, though, is always used to define a document's headers and footers, while **Stock Layout 1** is called up automatically at the start of a document.

Stock response

Let's see them in action. Open your document and make sure you leave the cursor at the point in the document from which you want the 'imported' layout to begin. Let's assume that we've set up a layout (called **Intro** in the Stock Layout menu) which we want to use at the start of our document. Take the cursor right to the top of the text. Press [f2] to bring the Layout Editor onto the screen, then choose **New layout**. To access your ready-made layouts, open the [f5] Stock menu. The program will then list them for you.

All you have to do is select the appropriate layout (in this case **Intro**. If you've remembered the advice we gave out earlier on, you will have called it something logical) and press [ENTER]. [EXIT] will return you to the document. You will have noticed that a **LayouT** code has been inserted in the document where you left the cursor. Hit the [DOC PAGE] key to see the new layout take effect.

Don't forget to instruct the program to return to **Stock Layout 1: Main** when the introduction is finished.

LocoScript 1: Ringing the changes

Alas, LocoScript 1's Layout facilities are nowhere near as sophisticated or as versatile as those of its successor. As we saw last month, using the same layout in the course of one document is easy; what you have to bear in mind, however, is that editing a layout will affect any text in your document which uses this layout. It's a facility which should be used with care.

To make any changes to a particular layout, open the document in question under [E]dit mode and press [f2] to open the program's Layout Editor. The resulting menu offers you two choices: you can either insert a new layout (**Insert layout**) or change the existing one (**Edit layout**).

In our case, we want to make a few changes to the document's **LayouT2**. For this reason, enter the figure 2 at the **Layout ??** prompt at the bottom of the menu. You will be presented with the, by now, familiar Layout screen.

Note, however, that this menu won't allow you to alter the Base Layout. If you want to make any changes to this (LocoScript 1's default document layout) it will involve editing the document's **File Header**. This can be considered as the rough equivalent of LocoScript 2's **Document setup**. Therefore, if your current layout happens also to be the Base Layout, the Layout menu will not give you the option of editing the current layout (see the second screenshot on the right).

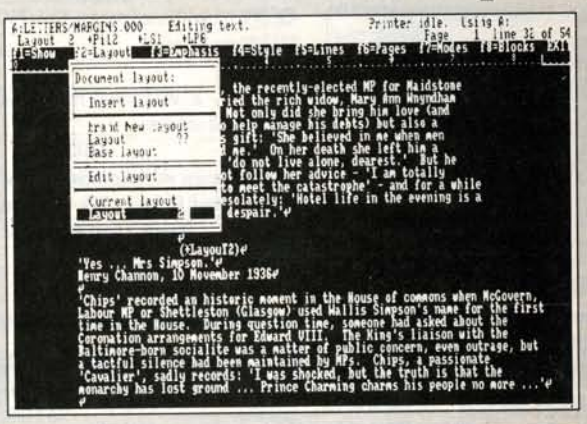
But as with everything else, there are ways and means. So why would you want to bother altering LocoScript 1's Base Layout anyway?

DIY templates

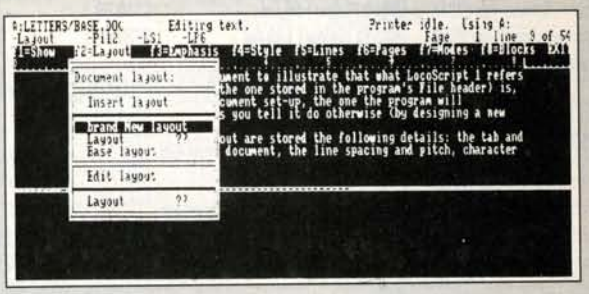
LocoScript documents are grouped together on the basis of their similar layouts. The master document for each group is the Template.STD, the file which contains the Base Layout. When you create a new document in a particular group, you are working on a copy of this template, and editing a template amounts to altering the Base Layout. How is it done?

Simple. Open the document in question under [E]dit mode. Open the [f7] Modes menu and select **Edit header**. Press [f7] again, this time to access the Options menu and finally press [f1] for the Layout menu. You will see the LocoScript 1 Layout screen, which can be used as normal. The difference is the information line at the top of the screen indicating that you are, in fact, editing the Base Layout. ■

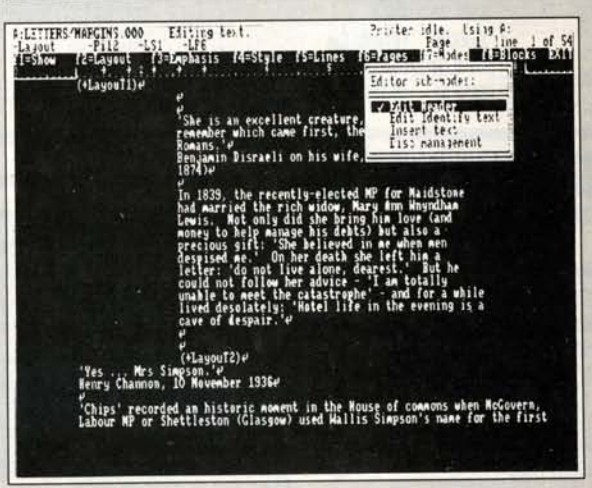
LocoScript 1



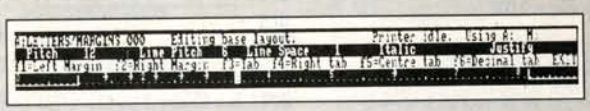
1) Editing the most recent layout with LocoScript 1. [E]dit the document and press [f2]. Select the second option, **Edit layout.**



2) Just to prove that LocoScript's template Base Layout can't be altered from the [f2] menu. Notice the lack of the **Edit current layout** option on this menu.



3) You have to alter LocoScript's File header to change the Base layout. [E]dit the document. Open the [f7] Modes menu and select **Edit header**. Press [f7] again, this time to access the Options menu and finally press [f1] for the Layout menu.



4) The Layout screen from which you alter the Base layout. Use it in exactly the same way as you would the ordinary Layout Editor.

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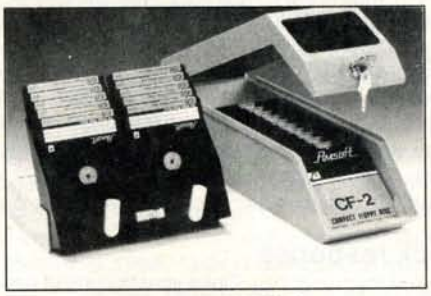

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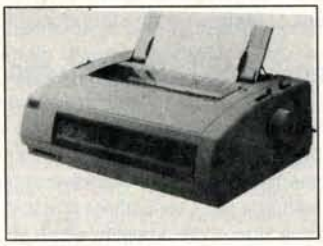

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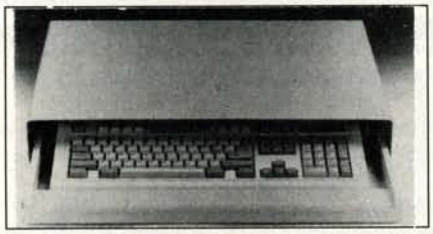

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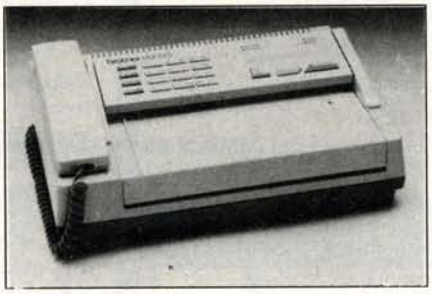

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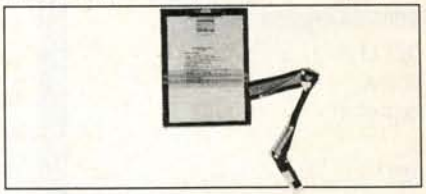

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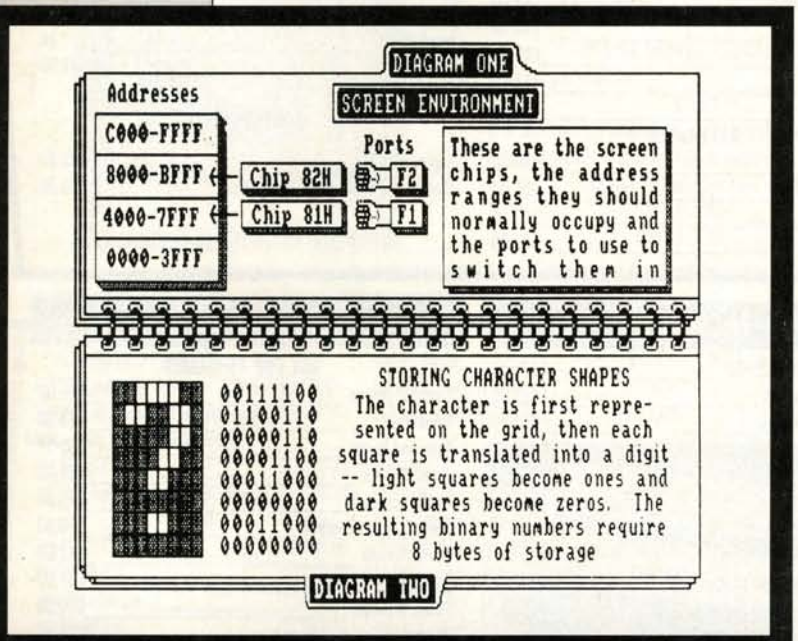
SCREEN SECRETS

In the last of the present series, Richard Cox unleashes the graphics power of his PCW

The third and final part of the series on the anatomy of the PCW. You'll find there's very little blood however, so non-programmers, before you sigh and move on, bear with us. We take things quite steadily. So if hexadecimal makes you dizzy, just ignore it and the listings too. Programmers, on the other hand, will find valuable information here.

This article deals with the task of drawing graphics on the screen. By this we mean displaying things other than text – text is easy because the operating system already has plenty of routines to deal with it. There is a thing called GSX which provides routines for graphics; however, it has been described as cumbersome and slow (issue 38, page 69, last column). But if you follow the instructions you will be able to achieve slick, professional graphics effects, quickly and efficiently.



Top: This indicates which address positions chips should be switched into and which output ports are used. Above: how the shape of a character is stored.

scrcopy:

```
;HL—>source, DE—>destination
;BC=no. of bytes to move

DI ;Do not disturb
MVI A,82H ;Higher screen chip
OUT 0F2H ;in range 8000H..BFFFH
MVI A,81H ;Lower screen chip
OUT 0F1H ;in range 4000H..7FFFH
CALL copy
MVI A,86H ;Restore TPA chips
OUT 0F2H
DCR A
OUT 0F1H
EI
RET
```

findchar:

```
;A=character number, DE—>buffer

MOV L,A ;A=ASCII value: move it...
MVI H,00 ;to HL.
DAD H ;times 2
DAD H ;times 4
DAD H ;times 8
LXI B,0B800H ;Start of character set
DAD B ;Add it on.
LXI B,0008H ;8 bytes of data to move
CALL scrcopy ;Get it.
RET
```

Chips with everything

Direct communication with the PCW screen requires access to the screen environment which is housed in part of chip 81H and all of chip 82H (diagram one).

Assembly listing **scrcopy** (below left) will access the screen environment and copy a block of data. This may be used to move data within the screen environment, or to transfer data between the TPA area and the screen environment.

When your program accesses the screen environment, the two middle-range chips are switched out of action, so you must ensure that you don't need any of the code or data which they contain while the screen environment is in place. Everything you need must be located in address range 0000H-3FFFH. This is easy since programs are usually loaded at address 100H, so you just need to ensure that the routine is near the start of the program.

Remember that interrupts are disabled at the start of **scrcopy**. Normally the PCW has several housekeeping jobs to do while your program is running, so it interrupts at intervals to do them; for example, it scans the keyboard 50 times each second. At the end of each interrupt the PCW restores the normal TPA chips, which could be disastrous while a screen routine is running. To prevent this, the instruction **DI** disables interrupts until the instruction **EI** enables them again.

Character study

The first department in the screen environment is the character set data at addresses 0B800H-0BFFFH; here the shapes of the letters are stored in ASCII order (diagram two).

It is first represented on a grid with eight rows/columns. Then each square is translated into a digit – light squares become 1's and dark squares 0's – we now have a list of eight binary numbers. Since each number can be stored conveniently in one byte, just eight bytes are required for each character. (The first in each group represents the top row of the grid.)

Assembly listing **findchar** (left) shows how to locate and copy the graphics data for any character.

Dot games

The next department in the screen environment is the screen memory itself, which is located between the addresses 5930H and 0B7FFH. Before describing the layout and use of this area, let's consider the physical screen on your PCW, the cathode ray tube (CRT).

When you first switch on the PCW, the whole screen lights up momentarily and then a dark border forms around its edge. The light area is the portion of the screen which may be used for display. It consists of (wait for it) 184,320 tiny dots arranged in a grid, 256 dots by 720. The dots are called pixels and are very close together; in fact, it is only possible to see the horizontal gaps between them (diagram three).

The inside of the screen is coated with a luminescent substance. It glows brightly when hit by the beam emitted from the back of the tube. The image you see is made up of those pixels which are currently glowing.

The whole screen is drawn by directing the beam at all of

the pixels in turn, switching it on only for the bright pixels. The beam travels along each of the 256 rows from left to right and this happens hundreds of times a second, quite independently of the CPU. There is a special circuit which causes the beam to sweep and controls whether it is on or off at each pixel position – we'll call this the CRT circuit. The luminescence does not last long; that's why the screen is constantly re-drawn, and for this purpose the screen image is stored in memory.

Address the issue

Computer memory consists of a vast number of tiny circuits, each able to store a 0 or a 1, i.e. a binary digit, or 'Bit'; the screen memory is no exception. For the screen store, the PCW uses bit mapping, which means that each bit (1 or 0) represents one pixel (bright or dark).

Memory bits are arranged in groups of eight (eight bits make a byte), so one memory address contains the information for not one, but eight pixels. Consequently, the screen is divided into groups of eight pixels and stored, one group per byte.

This arrangement may seem a little obtuse, but it has an advantage for text display: the pixel information for one character is stored in consecutive addresses. Look at diagram four and you'll see that the addresses in each bold box are consecutive, which makes it easy to put one character in each box. This is helpful since characters normally appear in regimented rows and columns anyway.

An important fact to note is that the bit map for a whole pixel row is not a consecutive list of bytes; each byte is eight bytes away from its neighbour. This must be remembered when finding the bit for a particular pixel.

Watch this space

Let's go back to the CRT circuit, and imagine that the beam is aimed at the extreme left edge of the screen. First, the circuit needs to find the bit map for the current row. At address 0B600H in the screen environment is a kind of notice board which holds a list of 256 addresses, each of which points to the bit map for one pixel row, starting with the top row.

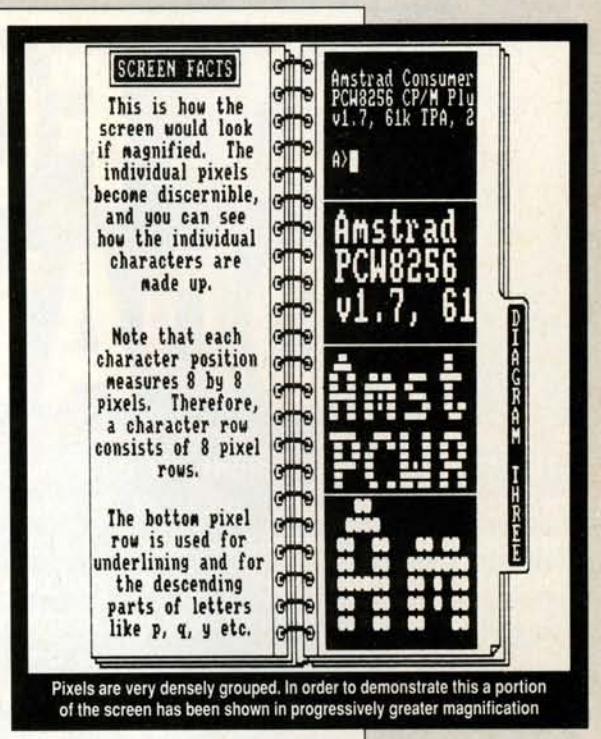
So, how would you go about setting (i.e. lighting up) the 7th pixel in the 3rd row? Well, we need the bit map for that row first. Each entry in the notice board takes two bytes, so the 3rd entry is at 0B606H. Let's imagine that the entry is 5930H. The 7th pixel is in the first group of eight, so the bit we need is at that address, 5930H.

First, read the byte. For the sake of argument let us suppose its value is 00000000B (binary). We have to change the 7th zero to a one, 00000010B. Then we put the revised value back into address 5930H – and the screen will change accordingly.

What about setting the 10th pixel in the same row? This time it is the second group of eight, so the address will be 5938H (check diagram four).

The routine **setpix** illustrates how to read (and decode) a notice board entry and set any pixel.

Using this method it is possible to draw lines, boxes, circles, in fact a whole range of shapes directly on to the screen – although setting one pixel at a time can be a laborious process!



Pixels are very densely grouped. In order to demonstrate this a portion of the screen has been shown in progressively greater magnification

Icon, if you can

An icon is a static symbol displayed on the screen, and is a useful, visual means of identifying a particular file. It's also quite easy to produce. Here are two methods.

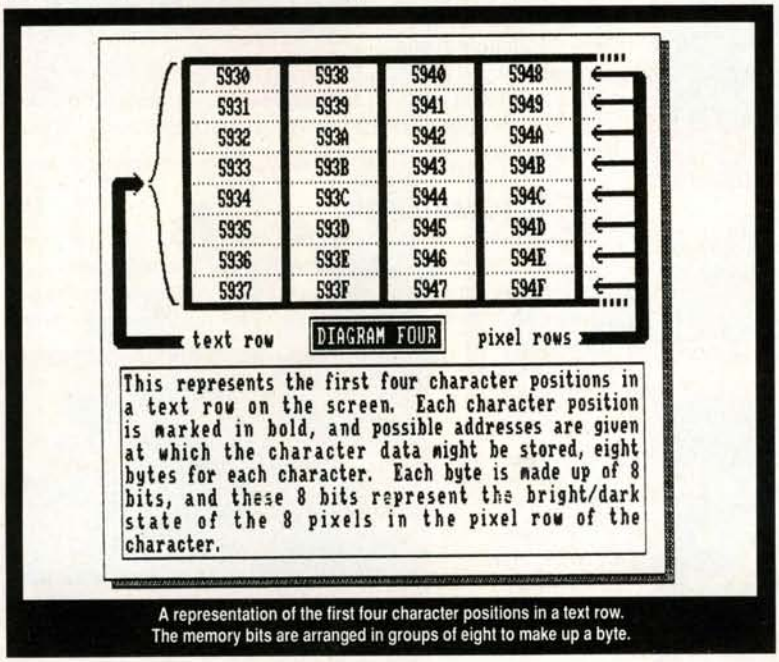
If the icon you want is not going to be very large, you can redefine the shape of some little used characters in the PCW set (you can find plenty of these on the keyboard with [ALT] and [EXTRA]) before placing them on the screen in the desired position using screen codes.

If you want an icon that is large, or you don't like that method, then try this. Divide your shape up into blocks of eight by eight pixels (like a character grid). The number of blocks you end up with will give you the number of character positions which the icon will eventually occupy.

Then choose which character positions on the screen you want to use, and one by one find the corresponding bit maps. Then it's simply a matter of placing each block on the screen according.

Look before you bleep

From time to time the addresses on the notice board change, so you should read the notice board each time you access the screen memory. The bit maps, however, are always in the range 5930H to 0B5FFH (unless you change them yourself, which is rather a tricky business). To save the whole screen, you need to save only from 5930H (the start of the bit address on the maps) to 0B7FFH (the last notice board.) ■



A representation of the first four character positions in a text row. The memory bits are arranged in groups of eight to make up a byte.

setpix:

```
;DE=x co-ordinate, HL=y co-ordinate

PUSH D ;Stack x co-ordinate.
CALL pixbyte ;Find & stack address
PUSH H ;of screen memory byte.
LXI D,pixbuff ;Destination
LXI B,0001H ;Copy just one byte.
CALL scrcopy
POP D ;Address of screen byte
POP H ;X co-ordinate
MOV A,L ;Find which bit in the
ANI 07H ;byte must be set
MOV B,A ;B=no. of shifts reqired
MVI A,80H ;Assume left hand bit.
CNZ rotate ;Shift it if not.
LXI H,pixbuff ;Point to the byte copy.
ORA M ;OR to set the bit
MOV M,A ;Store result in pixbuff
LXI B,0001H ;Get ready to...
CALL scrcopy ;move 1 byte
RET
```

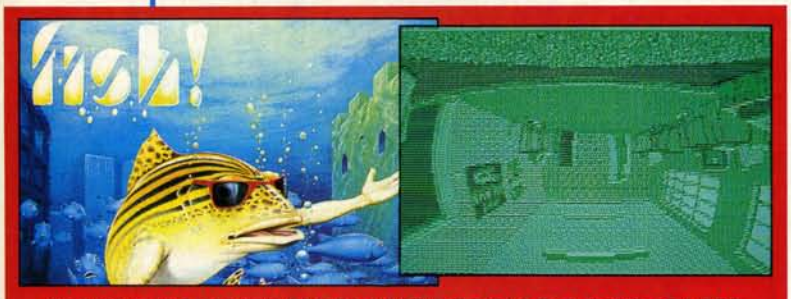
PLAY FOR TODAY

The PCW, like the majority of its owners, is a hard-working creation. For most of its life, it processes words, builds spreadsheets, bases data and programs in nearly any language you could name. But there comes a time when the fun is mightier than the word. Unhappily, many games have been dropped by the software houses due to lack of demand. Even so, we will be looking at these golden-oldies which might still be available second hand. First off though, Tim Smith presents the PCW-player's current Top Ten.

1 FISH !

Beyond any shadow of doubt, the most popular and widely available type of game for the PCW is the 'interactive adventure', an electronic role-playing-game.

Probably (this means 'in the opinion of the reviewer') the best of the lot is Fish! from Rainbird. Purely on weird-stakes, Fish! has to rate as the most entertaining, mind-bending and generally enjoyable of the crop. Get it while you can.



£24.99 ● RAINBIRD/MAGNETIC SCROLLS ● 0666 504 326

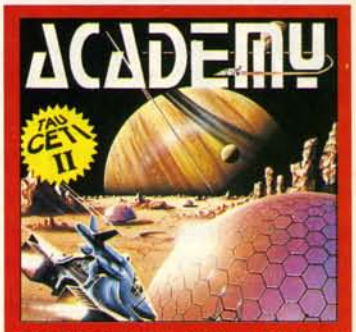
2 CLOCK CHESS '89

Second slot in this highly personal run-down goes to one of the many excellent chess programs available. Clock Chess 89 from CP Software offers such ego-boosting (or busting) options as Kreigspiel — a blindfold game. Excellent tactical play for all the budding Kasparovs and Capas out there.

£19.95 ● CP SOFTWARE ● 0993 823463

3 ACADEMY – TAU CETI II *(8000s only)*

A close run thing here between the two Tau Cetis. But Academy, the second in the series wins it by a pair of green, goggle-eyed heads. Intelligent action games are few and far between and until someone decides to produce a PCW version of the all-time classic Elite, Tau Ceti II (Academy) will rule the roost.



£19.95 ● CRL ● 01 533 2918

4 WORLD OF SOCCER

The 8000 Plus office is surrounded by our sister magazines two of whom deal with cutting-edge games machines, so the choice for number 4 caused some mirth, owing to the lack of speed. World of Soccer has given this Reviews Editor many a late night. You choose teams, assess form, and play the matches. Although the play is slow, the addictivness makes up for it. For true football fans the world over (even Aston Villa).

£15.95 ● CODA SOFTWARE ● 01 789 9551

5 KNIGHTORC

Knightorc sees you as a small, smelly, Monday-morning-feeling Orc called Grindleguts. If you're the kind of person who found Ratso ("Don't call me Ratso") from Midnight Cowboy an amiable, fun-loving soul, then you will just love Grindleguts. Knightorc's three adventures in one package see you gaining allies and beating people up — or rather getting beaten up — loads of spells and puzzles. It's grainy, nasty and generally compulsive.

£19.95 ● RAINBIRD/LEVEL 9 ● 01 631 5373

6 TOMAHAWK

"We're the the first of the ninth son. Air Cav', air mobile!", so said Colonel Kilgore. The arguments about military simulations cause a great many hackles to rise – are they bloodthirsty or pure fantasy? Well with Tomahawk, which to the best of my knowledge is still available, you have to learn how to fly the helicopter before blasting things with it. Quite excellent and more mind-bending than some adventures.

£19.95 ● DIGITAL INTERNATIONAL ● 0276 684959

7 TETRIS *(8000s Only)*

Tetris had to get in here somewhere. The game which amazed reviewers and players on nearly every computer in existence. You have to drop blocks of different shapes (hands up those who like the T-shapes?) in order to build a wall. It beeps irritatingly but you'll be too engrossed to notice. Sounds simple? So did economics to Nigel Lawson and look how wrong he was.

£19.95 ● DIGITAL INTERNATIONAL ● 0276 684959

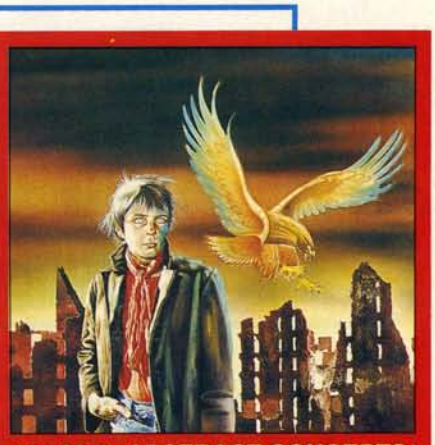
8 SCAPEGHOST

Scapeghost is yet another interactive adventure for the PCW, and a good one. Where Knightorc shows how to be gross, vile and a laugh, Scapeghost shows how to deal with being dead. You are a detective called Alan Chance (as in a ghost of a ...). Or to be more accurate you were once, and now you have the chance to prove yourself innocent of a frame-up. You make some friends, meet some fiends and with lusk, skill and sound judgement, you win the day. Very slick and funny, and with plenty of atmosphere.

£15.95 ● LEVEL 9 ● 0344 487597

9 MINDFIGHTER

Playing Mindfighter is roughly equivalent to listening to hours of Leonard Cohen, Joy Division, Thelonius Monk or Mahler (all tastes catered for here) – at first it seems plain morose, depressing and gloomy for the sake of gloom but it soon grabs your intellect. Set in post-nuclear (we assume) holocaust Southampton (Sav'm'pton) there's a free novel but no laughs here. Even so you'll find yourself playing it endlessly.



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10 YES CHANCELLOR!

Now this might come as a surprise to many people but Yes Chancellor! from Topologika rates. An intensely frustrating game where you must try to keep inflation down, the votes up, the Unions happy and most of all you must keep your job. Written in BASIC — the game gives an enormous sense of achievement and fun. Brian Kerslake of Topologika has brought many excellent games to the PCW — check out Avon as well.

£14.95 ● TOPOLOGIKA ● 0733 244682

These we have loved

Ah, those were the days. Computerland is fast and loose with software companies waxing and waning, games coming and going and programmers exploding in the corner when someone speaks English to them. Here are just four of the best older games ... many are still available secondhand or sometimes via mail order.

Batman *(8000s only)*

Before the hoo-ha and film-hype there was a cartoon called Batman. From this came the quite superb game of the same name by Ocean software. Unhappily Ocean tell us that they don't make PCW games anymore. But if you can get it ... then get it!

£14.95 ● OCEAN SOFTWARE ● 061 6633

Armageddon Man *(8000's only)*

All you have to do is keep the whole world happy, fed, watered and un-nuked. Simple. You deal with incoming messages while decoding radio signals, deploying peak-keeping forces and generally staying sane. Reet gradely! The company are no more so you'll have to look.

£19.99 ● MARTECH – they don't actually exist anymore!

Stationfall

An Infocom classic. It was a toss up between this and the Hitchhicker's Guide to the Galaxy, Ballyho and the appallingly lewd Leather Goddesses of Phobos (have a sense of humour and it's okay). But Floyd, the dippy robot, wins the day and the rating. A vital part of any adventurer's collection.

£24.99 ● INFOCOM ● (USA) 617 576 3190

Head Over Heels *(8000's only)*

Again from Ocean Software (see Batman) Head Over Heels rates as a true PCW classic. This really is a must for serious enjoyment merchants. Chasing around a castle lobbing doughnuts at the foe ... gamer's heaven???

£14.95 ● OCEAN SOFTWARE 061 832 6633

Conclusion

It must be remembered that the secondhand market is strong and that many mail-order firms have stocks of games ready for sale. This choice of both the current and revered oldie games is highly subjective. The main thing is to enjoy yourself.

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8256 ribbons also suit 8512s. We recommend FABRIC ribbons for this printer.		
9512 Multistrike Films	2746MS	B
9512 Fabric Black	2746FN	B
9512 Fabric LONGLIFE Extra value - 750kchars	2746LL	C
9512 Fabric Colours Blue, Brown, Red, Green	2746C	C

Multistrike films are the kind supplied with new 9512s but FABRIC ribbons can be used with Ribbon Refresh.

Lifetimes: Multistrike: 100 kchars
Fabric Std: 400 kchars
Fabric Longlife: 750 kchars

RIBBON PRICES inc VAT & post

	1-off	2-off	5-off
Price Band B	£3.95	£7.45	£16.95
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Mix 'n' Match: ANY 5 Band B for £16.95
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Our own invention - Carbon in a Can!

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BLIND DATA

And computer shall talk unto computer, to modem, printer and plotter. That's the idea with the Verran AC Datalink; Tim Smith puts the theory to the test

VERRAN AC DATALINK

£175 (each + VAT) ● Verran Electronics ● 0256 811666

More people are using computers than ever before, not just the multi-national companies but local shops, schools, clubs and in the home. The machines are beginning to lose some of their mystique as people learn more about them and demand more from them.

In the early days there were mainframes with slave terminals; these were followed by the personal or stand-alone computer (such as your PCW). The next fashion was to use many stand-alones linked by networks or Local Area Networks (LANs). The LAN is still with us, enabling several personal computers to share hard discs, printers, modems and plotters.

However, the LAN presents a number of problems to the small scale user such as a club or a business with 5 or 10 machines. New software has to be learnt to control the hardware. New hardware connections have to be installed and mile upon mile of cabling has to be laid out of harm's way.

The Verran AC Datalink seeks to solve these irritations and has attacked them from what seems to be, at first sight, a logical angle.

The mains event

The approach that Verran Electronics have taken is to point out that any building which uses computers already has built-in cables and sockets in the form of mains electricity. The logic here is that you should be able to send packets of data through the mains from one device to another. A device can be anything from a PCW to a modem, an IBM PC to a laser printer.

The idea is a good one and it appeared at first (and from the plaudits it had been receiving) that it would be a successful one. So, in order to put advertising and media hype to the test, we set out to link the following pieces of equipment: a PCW to a PCW, a PCW to a PC and a PCW to an Amstrad SM2400 modem.

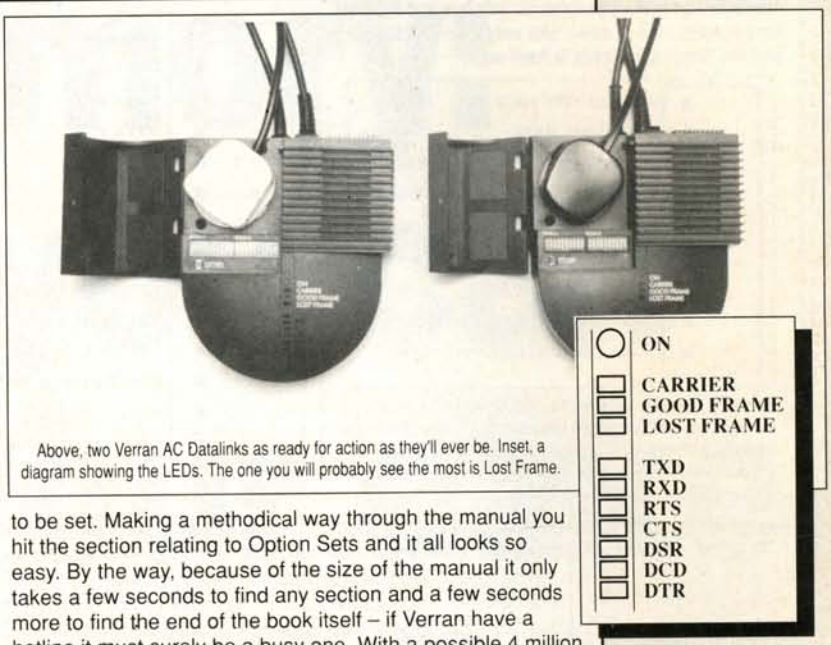
This became an epic struggle of person versus machine which stretched over a number of days. At the end of this period the best that could be said was that the boxes were prettier than a straightforward serial cable.

Linking two PCWs – an 8512 and 9512 across about three feet of desk space was interesting enough. Both Datalinks were plugged in to a twin mains socket, obviously on the same circuit. We decided not to bother with any fancy software but instead to stick with CP/M's faithful PIP.COM.

Wicked switch of the east

The first thing to do was to configure each datalink in order that one would recognise the other. This was done strictly by the book. We wanted to set the machines up for Serial transfer in order that both could send and receive. This meant setting the five coloured slide-switches on the datalink connector head. Pushing these towards the head of the lead itself set them to DCE straight through.

All well and good, but then the twenty dip-switches had to be set. Making a methodical way through the manual you hit the section relating to Option Sets and it all looks so easy. By the way, because of the size of the manual it only takes a few seconds to find any section and a few seconds more to find the end of the book itself – if Verran have a hotline it must surely be a busy one. With a possible 4 million settings to be had we were certainly spoilt for choice.



Above, two Verran AC Datalinks as ready for action as they'll ever be. Inset, a diagram showing the LEDs. The one you will probably see the most is Lost Frame.

The manual tells us that 'Switches A3 through A6 in Option Set IV reduce switch setting to a minimum, by allowing you to program standard, or default settings...'. This sounded like just what we wanted, nice and simple. So, we switched A1 and A2 to On in order to set each Verran to Option Set IV. Next was to handle row B and another ten switches. Again, purely because this was a quick test across a desk, we decided only to alter switch B10

Not jolly hockey sticks!

The Verran AC Datalink hauled pages of glossy advertising in its wake and on the back of one such piece is a list or 'Who's Who' of users. Names such as IBM, The Metropolitan Police, Coca-Cola, The Stock Exchange and Lillywhites are included.

We contacted Lillywhites, the respected sports-shop in Piccadilly in order to discover what they thought of the Datalinks. Kirk Daley, a programmer at the company, explained that "we had three units for about a week and then sent them back."

They had been using the datalinks for printer sharing. They use a number of computers, including a PCW, and needed to link them up with two Kyocera F1000 laser printers. Kirk's first thought was that the datalinks were a good idea until he discovered that 'they were very difficult to set up. Once we had got them in contact with the printer we realised that you could only have a pair working at any one time. If you wanted to actually print something out you had to see the other people with datalinks and ask them to turn them off."

After this Kirk began to see the dreaded Bad Frame indicator on the top of the Verran, flashing in the middle of a print run. This meant lost data and a restart to the whole process.

"Frankly, I see them as very expensive pieces of kit. You need at least three of them to make it worthwhile (a minimum investment of £525.00). If you only have two – one linked to a printer and one to a computer, you may as well just use a cable. Three units will at least allow you to link two computers to a peripheral device. We would be more likely to go for a network."

So, even though Lillywhites have used the Datalink – for a week – and Verran do have a slim right to feature them in their advertising "Who's Who of Users", it would be a wise idea to take this with a pinch of salt.

Two interfaced

The two standard interfaces which the PCW uses are the RS232 (serial) and Centronics (Parallel). The former has been standard in computing since 1969 when the Electronics Industry Association (IEA) agreed their most recent revision – revision C. 'Serial' basically means that information can be sent and received from and to an RS232c port. It deals with one-way communication – say from a PCW to a printer. 8000 series PCWs are RS232c and Centronics compatible but you will need an interface in order to make use of the facilities. 9512s come complete with an RS232 port at the back beside the printer port but you will need an interface for Centronics capabilities.

A Verran AC Datalink is, theoretically, able to handle both serial (RS232c) and parallel (Centronics) interfaces. Each unit comes with three adapters. One will convert a parallel connector to a serial (and vice-versa), another converts a male RS232c connector to a female of the same breed and the last acts as a two-way female RS232c adaptor. The reason for these additions is that computers as well as peripherals (printers and modems, for example) tend to come with only male RS232c ports and the Verran cable head is itself male.

1	PROTECTIVE GROUND	(PGND)
2	TRANSMIT DATA	(TXD)
3	RECEIVE DATA	(RXD)
4	REQUEST TO SEND	(RTS)
5	CLEAR TO SEND	(CTS)
6	DATA SET READY	(DSR)
7	SIGNAL GROUND	(GND)
8	CARRIER DETECT	(CD)
9	DATA TERMINAL READY	(DTR)

1, 19	STROBE
2, 20	DATA 1
3, 21	DATA 2
4, 22	DATA 3
5, 23	DATA 4
6, 24	DATA 5
7, 25	DATA 6
8, 26	DATA 7
13	PRINT ENABLED
10, 27	ACKNOWLEDGE
14, 16, 33	GROUND
12	PAPER EMPTY
11, 28	BUSY
17	CHASSIS GROUND

Above left is a sketch diagram of an RS232c (serial) interface showing pins, explanations and abbreviations. Compare this to the inset of the Verran's LEDs on page 29. To the left is a Centronics (parallel) interface showing the various pins which need to be linked.

which, going by the book, is supposed to change a line-feed sent into a line-feed received. Job done, the information was saved to the datalinks by pressing Store for slightly longer than the two seconds required. The PCWs were plugged into the Verrans, powered up and the following commands entered on the 8512:

DEVICE AUXIN:=SIO [NOXON,9600]

and on the 9512

DEVICE AUXOUT=SIO [NOXON,9600]

These two commands basically set the machines up to realise that the 9512 would be sending at a speed of 9600 baud, with no protocol (it wouldn't bother waiting to see if the other machine was ready to receive). Obviously the 8512 was set to receive at the same rate with the same lack of protocol. Straight forward enough so far.

Our first glimpse of the Verran AC Datalink from the press release. A 9512 is nuzzled against it for no apparent reason.

Return to sender

The two PCWs now knew who they were and what they were supposed to be doing, so now for the off. PIP.COM is a versatile command and in this instance we decided to use it as a postman. The 9512 was told the following:

PIP AUX:=CON:

This tells it that anything typed at the console (keyboard) should be sent directly to the Auxiliary Input/Output device (RS232c port). The 8152 was told

PIP CON:=AUX:

This does the opposite and anything coming in to the Auxiliary device is sent to the screen.

All that was needed now was to type a message on the screen of the 9512 and hope. Success at first go! Things looked good, so we decided to really test the mettle of the datalinks. The 8512 was moved about 15 yards away into another office, behind a partition wall. None of the settings were changed, the 9512 was left exactly where it was. Off we went, the message was sent and surprisingly there was no luck at all. The connections were checked.

On the rear of each link there are two switches – Gain and Path. The first acts as a signal booster while the second, " Maintains transmission even across different ring mains and phases" (according to the advertising at least). So we flicked both of these to On and still all we got was garbage.

Heartbreak hotel

The garbage was characterised by a constant, pulsing stream of characters across the receiving screen. Maybe the datalinks were too far apart – possibly the two offices were on entirely different mains circuits? Neither case was true ... the maximum recommended distance between links is 50 metres and the two offices were quite definitely on the same circuit.

The next thing to try was to set a modem up, again on the same desk. Normally we use a serial cable to link an 8512 to an Amstrad SM2400 modem. Using this we can contact bulletin boards across the country. The cable is about a foot and a half long.

To achieve a link between PCW and modem we had to reconfigure both datalinks again. To spare you a long drawn out description we won't go into the various settings we used in an attempt to talk to the world. Suffice to say the story ends in nothing more than three hours of dip-switch changing, cable checking, transmission and retransmission, cursing and generally arriving at a 'non-linked-data-situation-scenario-downside'.

After all this work it transpired that we had a faulty unit (this information courtesy of Steve Patient who had been having much the same problems while attempting a review for our sister magazine PC Plus).

This information came from the company two weeks ago and we are still waiting for a 'working unit'. The intriguing part of all this is that the datalinks were perfectly happy to speak unto each other across desk space with no interceding hardware. They would even make contact with a printer.

Conclusion

Where does this leave the prospective user? Well, with a flimsy manual, a great deal of time needed to configure each unit, the fact that only five pairs may be installed at any one time and a minimum working investment of £525 (plus VAT) it doesn't look too good.

Verran have recently won a Sunday Times design award (and the design, at least superficially, is stylish) and have brought out a new range of datalinks which are dedicated to printer sharing. This is probably its only strength. As for the rest of the advertised blarney about modems, plotters and other computers ... our advice would be to stick with some good cables, software you know or, at a pinch, invest in a cheap, proven network. Above all, and to quote a song, "Don't believe the hype." ■

VERRAN AC DATALINK

PLUSES	MINUSES
▲ You can use your own software	▼ Flimsy manual
▲ Pretty to look at	▼ Over complex for non-techie
	▼ Expensive
	▼ Unreliable

DOCUMENTATION	2/5	EASE OF USE	2/5
RANGE OF FEATURES	2/5	PERFORMANCE	1/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 7/20

FLIPPER 2 PLUS and expanded memory: now you can have your cake and eat it.

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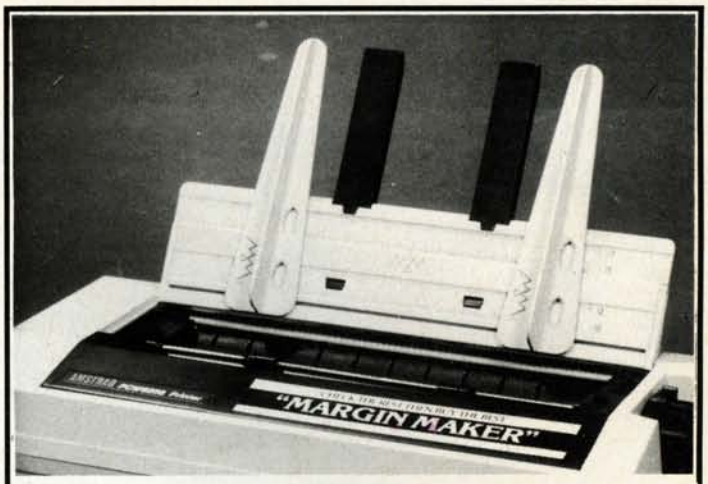

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DEMON WRITER

Horror writing is not merely the realm of the hack'n'slash brigade. Even Charles Dickens got involved occasionally. Chris Westwood, a successfully published novelist in the genre, gives some tips.

Almost invariably a story will come alive with the question 'What if?' What if my shadow, instead of following me along the high street, suddenly turned and ran in the opposite direction? What if the door to the bathroom one day opened, not into the bathroom but the Abyss? What if the things we dream, the worst things, were for once made real, were made flesh and bone?

There's a seldom-used phrase — 'Speculative Fiction' — which is meant to refer to the fields of horror, fantasy and science fiction, and which ought to be used more often. It brings with it no quick associations of sky rockets, meat cleavers and magical lost kingdoms, and credits the authors who work in these genres with positive qualities. Clive Barker and James Herbert are not only writing stories of fear and wonder, they are also speculating on issues which most of us exclude from our everyday lives: the dark things, let's call them, the taboo things.

Forbidden worlds

Death, the march of decay and Armageddon are scarcely ideal conversational topics when it comes to Sunday lunch or the village fête. Very few buddies will visit the local pub to trade ideas and hunches about Hell. But there is fear of one kind or another in all of us. It is, after all, an emotion as natural as joy or grief. And fear is the province of the horror writer, their stock in trade.

Like it or not, it's their job (if they're doing it properly) to unsettle and disturb the reader. They aren't there to reassure or to prove that 'everything turns out right in the end'. Nor is it their job to be morbid or prurient, even if curiosity is part of their trade. The very best horror fiction is truly liberating fiction; startling and subversive. To actually sit down and write the stuff is to discover that anything is possible, since the only things holding you back are your own imaginative powers and moral outlook.

There is, however, a certain percentage of dross in the field and unfortunately this is what gives the world its negative image of horror fiction. You know the kind of thing; murderous foetuses on the rampage, mindless axe killers dispatching nubile young victims left right and centre — horror's own junk-food for the indiscriminating.

At the far end of the spectrum, there are writers like the aforementioned Barker and Herbert — Brits like Ramsey Campbell, Yanks like Charles L Grant and Dennis Etichson — who are doing new and wonderful things in horror, changing and advancing the field while at the same time respecting its traditions.

Needless to say, anyone wishing to write horror needs to have read it — and not only the obvious, contemporary, mega-selling authors (Barker, Herbert, King, Banks, for example) but the founding fathers too. Edgar Allan Poe, M R James and H P Lovecraft (whose Cthullu Mthyos stories have spawned generations of grateful imitators) are excellent reference points.

The imitation game

It isn't sufficient, these days, merely to imitate, even though it's natural to begin by emulating those we admire. Many of us were first inspired to put pen to paper by the dungeons and swirling mists of the Hammer films of our youth. Yet it isn't quite enough to reproduce the gothics, not unless (like Peter Straub, alias Stephen King, author of the brilliant *Ghost Story*) you're capable of bringing new depth and meaning to those traditions. Which means immersing yourself in them by reading.

One brief look at Clive Barker's *Cabal* , to name but one, and you'll know that time has moved on. The mistake many nascent writers make is that stories written will so often be based directly upon stories read. Instead of searching his or her own heart, drawing from their own pool of rich experience, the beginner merely re-writes what has gone before. In my own case, before I discovered Ramsey Campbell's haunting, near-perfect brand of understated fiction, I'd believed that all dark tales should take place in New England, if not Transylvania. Then I read Campbell and suddenly the dramatic potential of my home town — a mining village with boarded-up houses and red-brick terraces — became all too apparent. It was only then that my first publishable novel, *A Light in the Black* , came together.

None of this is to say that one needs to have entered Hell itself in order to write of it. Raw experience is

Rat director

In the 1960s there was an Art Director who worked in a big advertising agency. Fed up with listening to copywriters boasting about the novels they wrote and never finished, he decided to write a book himself.

He is James Herbert; the book is The Rats.

preferable but not always essential! But the author of horror must have an eye (and a nose?) for the bizarre. Here on my desk is a five year old headline from the Guardian; '34 Die in Fight Over Wristwatch'. If this is as much information as we have, our first question must surely be why? And then we begin to speculate. And then wonder...What if....?

Terror, horror, gross-out

Well it's a start. But we still require a solid foundation — a storyline with recognisable, believable characters. It needs to come, at least in part, from life. We need to be shown a world we can relate to, we need to care for the characters as if they were friends we'd thought up. Events should sweep and carry us forward, always revealing something new, always involving us, occasionally astonishing or shocking us.

It isn't always necessary to be explicit, no matter how dark your subject; in fact it's often better not to be. In his excellent book about the genre, *Danse Macabre* , Stephen King defines three levels at which stories operate. The subtlest of these is 'Terror', wherein much is suggested and little actually described or shown by the author. This is the level to aim for. After-all, reading is an imaginative process and the less the author describes, the more the reader will have to imagine.

A whispered suggestion can be so much more effective than a shout. Check-out M R James' *Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad* or Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* for instance. Neither story offers a clear explanation for the cause of events and it's precisely this open-endedness, this lack of an easy solution that provides them with such power. These are, after-all, supernatural, speculative tales. A solution would only devalue them.

If hints and suggestions don't work, King says, go for the second level 'Horror'. Bring on the grinning corpses, the dancing demons! And if all else fails, there's always the 'Gross-out', a level to which (it has to be said) a handful of authors seem content to stoop all too often.

Attack of the killer endings

But whether your taste is for subtlety or graphic detail, do try and avoid the cliches of the genre; story resolutions of the it-was-all-a-dream variety. Worse still is that hoary old stand-by, the-thing-that-would-not-die, or the man-eating plague of worms/bugs/slime, and the hackneyed classic, the stalk and slash killer with a Norman Bates mother complex. And no more demonic children please!

Don't sacrifice characterisation to pyrotechnics either. For no matter how loud or quiet the dark tale may be, it's the people at its heart who we're concerned with. If we lose touch with the characters, if our story fails to connect with human feeling, no amount of panting hysteria, no number of violent explosions will make up for that loss.

One final recommendation is Ira Levin's 'Rosemary's Baby' — calm, assured, economical of language and beautifully plotted. Terrifying because of all it implies without ever speaking directly; a true role model if ever there was one. The worst things should always be unspoken. ■

The narrow gate

Carefully study who publishes what. It's as important as reading to learn the ground rules. Most major publishers handle one kind of genre fiction or another – Gollancz, Headline, Hooder, Century Hutchinson, Grafton, Macdonald, Collins and so on. But there are many who don't, so be careful.

Bear in mind too, that publishers may be receiving as many as 5,000 unsolicited manuscripts a year, of which only a tiny percentage will be published (or indeed even publishable).

A major problem for the beginner is that, sending out manuscripts on spec like this, there's little guarantee of finding a sympathetic reader/editor. So much depends on value judgement and plain pot-luck. It might be as well to try for an agent, since an agent will at least know the market intimately — who's looking for what, for example. Because publishers tend to view work submitted through agents as having already been vetted, they give it priority. You'll avoid the dreaded slush pile this way. But agents too are regularly rejecting at least 98% of the material they receive. Narrow is the gate that leads to salvation.

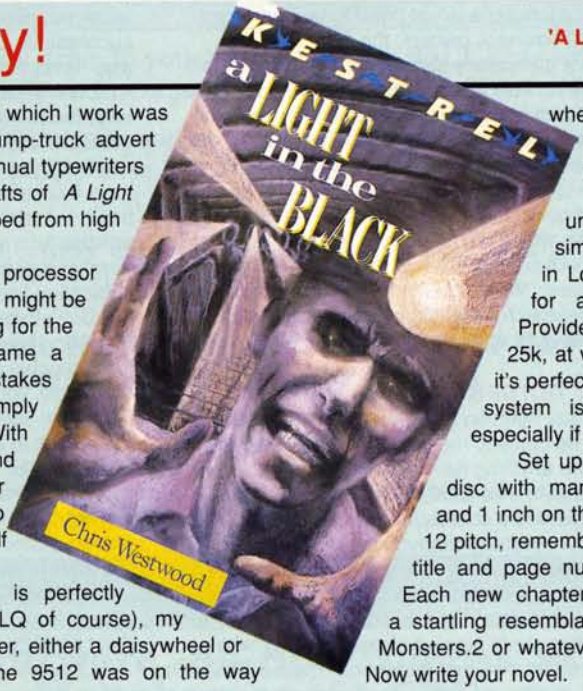
If your inclination is towards the short story rather than the novel, there are several opportunities — but the standards are high. (I personally find it easier to sell novels). The market here is dominated by American mags: *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Twilight Zone* and *Azimov's SF Magazine*, for example.

In Britain, there's *The Fear* and *Interzone*, both sagging beneath the weight of submissions, I gather. But there are small-press publications, many of remarkably high quality and offering openings galore for the aspirant writer. The snag, of course, is that these magazines are produced on a shoestring, so don't expect payment.

For further details of small-press and mass market publications, contact The British Fantasy Society, 15 Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey SM4 5DE.

Write away!

'A Light in the Black' by Chris Westwood



Want to hear a real horror story? The room in which I work was beginning to look like something from a dump-truck advert before the PCW arrived. Not one but two manual typewriters managed to break down during the early drafts of *A Light in the Black* . Both were ceremoniously dropped from high places before the third draft began.

The switch from typewriter to word processor seemed such a doddle that at first I worried I might be missing something. Once I'd stopped groping for the carriage return, the act of re-writing became a pleasure not a chore. In the old days, mistakes would run riot through my manuscripts, simply because re-typing seemed such a drag. With the coming of the PCW, however, agents and editors no longer felt guilty about asking for revisions. But it does help to know when to stop. It's dangerously easy to edit yourself into oblivion, so beware.

Although the print-out from my 8256 is perfectly adequate for submissions to publishers (NLQ of course), my next move will probably to get a better printer, either a daisywheel or an exotic 24-pin machine. If I'd known the 9512 was on the way when I plumped for the 8256, I would have waited. The 9512 seems to me to to be the ultimate writer's toy.

On the software front I'm basically unadventurous, using the PCW as a simple typewriter replacement. I still work in LocoScript 2 while feeling no great urge for anything faster or more glamorous. Provided the chapters are no longer than 20-25k, at which point things tend to slow up a lot, it's perfectly adequate. The LocoScript 2 template system is all you need for novels anyway, especially if (like me) you think and type slowly.

Set up a TEMPLATE.STD in group 0 of your disc with margins of about 1-2 inches on the left and 1 inch on the right. Double space using either 10 or 12 pitch, remembering to insert your initials, abbreviated title and page number in the header and you're there. Each new chapter created in the group will now bear a startling resemblance to this. Title your files Chapter.1, Monsters.2 or whatever suits. And that's the easy part done. Now write your novel.

SPEAKEASY

Brian Holley gets down to business with a computer and considers that vital element in any learning process: training

Government official Brian Holley for whom selecting and customising software is a way of life

Businessmen and women are often faced with a common dilemma. How can you learn to do one job while in the middle of another? It's a question that is particularly relevant to those running their own small businesses. Management training is often wholly inadequate — when it exists at all. As is the case with all politicians, most managers are promoted from the jobs in which they perform well to the jobs about which they know very little.

Industry provides some excellent examples of management training; but, even then, successful management is often stumbled across by accident rather than moulded by design. Small firms face enormous problems. It's all very well being able to manufacture pink toilet brushes – but what happens about marketing them, handling the accounts and the hundred and one other nagging but necessary things that take up 70% of the working day? The owner of a small business is often left clutching at straws and one of them is nearly always a microcomputer. Enter the PCW – and chaos. Not only must our poor manager continue running the business while undertaking a somewhat ad hoc self-education in management techniques, he or she has now got a computer to contend with as well.

Two problems in particular are likely to provide the biggest stumbling blocks: the first is learning to use the machine — the second is finding out which software is the most appropriate for the functions which need to be performed.

In many small business owners, the spirit of independence is a particularly strong one. They prefer to educate themselves. This is how I learned to play the guitar; but when my children began showing some interest in the instrument we sent them to guitar school. The result is that they are infinitely better guitarists than myself. Oh well.

By the same token, formal computer training is going to prove very beneficial to most people. Because it enables you to reach a plateau on the learning curve more quickly, it reduces the amount of time that has to be taken out of running the business. What you will have to do, however, is carry out a little research on what courses are available; not all of them will measure up to the needs of business people.

Courses for horses

A friend of mine has been on a computer course for two years. Yet when he came to me with a problem it was clear it had not taught him anything he really needed to know.

When I first became seriously involved in computing, both my boss and I attended a course. Ostensibly we would be following the same syllabus, although the courses were to be run from different sites at the same college. One day my boss asked me what I had been covering. I replied that the tutor was taking us through databases and data structures. He seemed reluctant to share his own experience but, when pressed, admitted that they had learnt how to get the machine to draw a picture of a house and to disintegrate it randomly until nothing was left! It sounded like my own attempts at DIY in the past — absolutely useless.

There is a definite need, therefore, to shop around for the right kind of training. Information on courses can usually be obtained from local further education colleges, some Job Centres, Area Career Offices or public libraries.

Some colleges now have sections which deal exclusively with the needs of small business managers and might be worth a visit. These are likely to provide information on the kind of courses that are most closely tailored to meet specific needs. The best source of information about course content and style tends to be people who have finished the course in question or who are currently undertaking it.

If you are impatient to get your hands dirty, you will want to get involved sooner rather than later. But from bitter experience I can tell you that when it comes to the computer industry, good basic training is necessary if the job is to be performed well. A proper training course may seem at the outset to be an expensive and time-consuming investment, but believe me — it will be considerably cheaper, quicker and less painful than wresting with your software night after night until the early hours.

You pays your money ...

There is a lot of talk about the wisdom of buying consultancy. Like all areas of business, computer consultancy has its share of cowboys. However, a good consultant should be able to save you enough money to pay the fee, but again — you have to shop around.

In some areas, there are clubs for managers of small businesses. These can be invaluable sources of information and advice as well as an excuse to top up the old alcohol level once in a while.

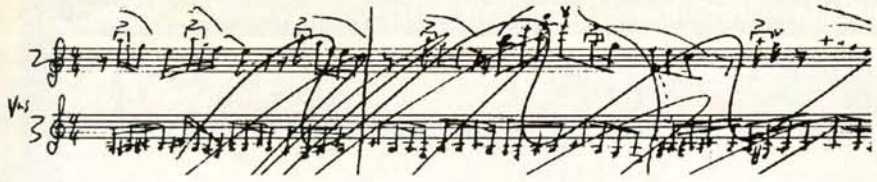
The whole business of choosing software is a crocodile-infested swampland. Adverts declare this or that program to be all you need to run your business smoothly and successfully. Unfortunately, those who created the software may never have run a business in their lives, or if they have, it probably had nothing whatsoever in common with pink toilet-brush manufacturing — or wherever else your particular expertise lies.

Clearly, it is cheaper to buy off-the-shelf software than to have it custom-made, but of course you only get what you pay for. And if you worry too much about the fortnightly epistles from your bank-manager and the worried frowns from your accountant, you might be forgiven for buying something from the bottom of the price range.

Don't forget, though, that this could cost you dearly later on when you discover that the software is unstable and you lose valuable data followed by valuable customers. More than likely, you will quickly run into a brick wall of limitations that throw you back onto a system that is part computer, part paperwork in which the same items have to be entered several times.

Take heart. There are some excellent systems on the market if you shop around and some of these are very cheap indeed. However, you may want to expand the system later which will mean transferring your data on to new software. The bottom line is, then, being able to move your data around from one program to another; it is the data that is the most important factor — not the program that processes it.

Of course, you may still have to learn while you earn, but planned training followed by thoughtfully selected software and a program of implementation is almost certainly better than the alternative – certifiable insanity. ■



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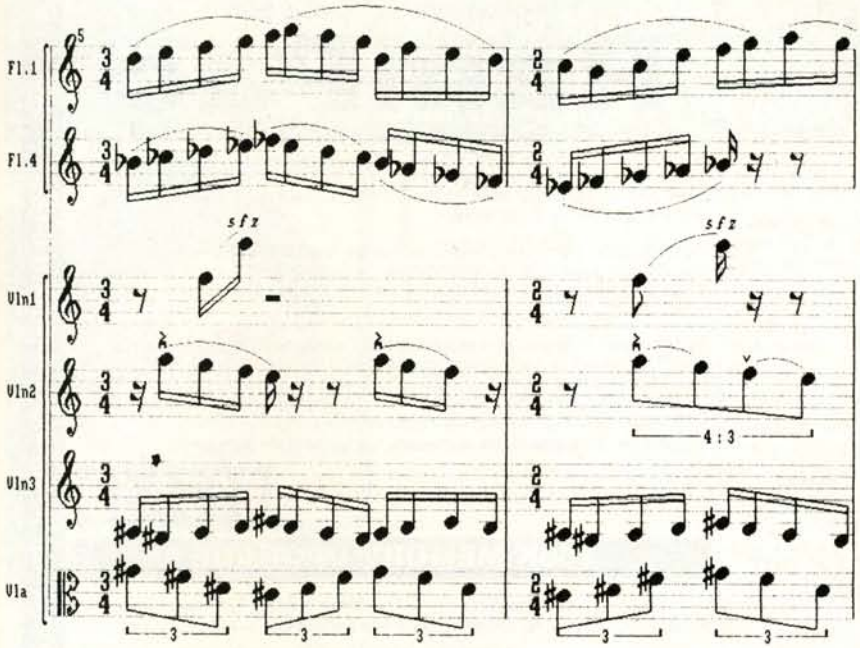

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ROSEMARY'S BABY

Rosemary Tympeny shows how the Northern Star Literary Agency is gradually crossing the North-South 'cultural divide' – with a little bit of help from her PCW

Rosemary Tympeny makes approachability the by-word of her Northern Star Literary Agency

The most difficult task in forging a career as a writer, is getting a publisher to take your work seriously. If you're lucky, a literary agent will help ease the burden and smooth the road. Unfortunately, they can often seem as unapproachable and intimidating as the publishers themselves, representing, not so much a stepping stone, as yet another obstacle. The problem is exacerbated if you live anywhere beyond the home counties where, with a few exceptions, most of the publishers and agencies, are based. The North-South divide can seem like a twenty foot brick wall before the would-be best-selling writer gets even halfway down the list of agents in the ubiquitous *Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*.

Even established writers can come up against the same problem, which is why I can write the previous paragraph with such bitter certainty. I started my literary career in the late seventies with a baker's dozen of ideological romances, before spending the first quarter of the 1980s roving Europe as a free-lance journalist specialising in music and politics (not usually both together). I gave up the gypsy life in 1983 for marriage, home and family, and settled back down to novel writing.

If you can't beat 'em ...

By now though, my style had matured somewhat. I was writing hard-nosed thrillers instead of mushy romance. Obviously none of my old contacts were going to be any use in making an impression on this totally new (for me) market. Nor did I have much success finding an agency to represent me. They were all too busy to take on new clients. Hardly any of them spelt my name right, and one suggested I might do better if I lived in London rather than Preston.

It was at that stage that I decided to fight back. If I couldn't get an agent to represent me, then I'd be my own agent and represent myself. And if I was going to represent myself, then I might as well go the whole way and become a fully-fledged literary agent.

That was how the Northern Star Literary Agency was born in the spring of 1987. It was a humble beginning. The staff consisted of myself (Director and Head of Fiction Dept) and my husband Kieran (Deputy director and Head of Non Fiction). The office was (and still is) a small room leading off the kitchen, which the surveyor's report called a utility room, and which we converted into a self-contained (although rather pokey) business unit.

The equipment consisted of a telephone, letter opener, and of course, the one thing without which we could not survive, a PCW8512, which can almost be counted as one of the staff, since it does most of the work anyway.

Naturally, no bank in its right mind would loan us money for such an enterprise. Apart from hard work, we had very little to put into the venture. For the first year, we didn't even have a spell checker (we used a Mallard BASIC one printed in an 8000 Plus listing for several months before we finally got hold of LocoSpell). We didn't even have any clients at the start.

A Star is born

We tested the water by promoting my own manuscripts under a variety of pseudonyms, gradually building up a list of publishing contacts, before we dared to advertise our services in the local press, and build up a corresponding list of clients with manuscripts to sell.

They were lean years and hard, but it's all beginning to pay off now. We started out with virtually nothing, and now we have a fully fledged business. As well as placing manuscripts with publishers on behalf of authors not just in Lancashire, but all over Britain, we offer our clients a full word-processing service, copying type-written manuscripts onto disc using LocoScript 2, with a lot of help from LocoSpell, which now has a user-defined dictionary that threatens to take over the M drive.

We suggest revisions for any promising material that comes our way, and frequently lend a hand with rewrites, particularly when the client doesn't have access to any other word-processing facilities. We answer queries from new authors about copyright, plagiarism and libel laws, for example, as well as advising our successful clients on how to approach such murky mysteries as income tax, NI, Public Lending Rights (PLR) and the like.

Ask the family

We still run the whole thing from home on one PCW, and there are still only the two of us employed full time. We also have a small network of home-workers, who we employ on a casual basis to either proof-read material submitted by potential clients, or word-process manuscripts, which is the most time-consuming and tedious part of the job.

The software we use now includes the full Locomotive 'family', as the main workhorse system, along with Cracker Turbo and a Sagesoft accounts suite for the financial figure juggling. Not having any staff as such, the Sage payroll system is a little redundant at present, but the books still have to balance at the end of each month, and our income and outgoings are all carefully recorded using Sage Accounts Plus.

The same system also comes into its own on the, as yet, far too rare occasions when a book we have placed for a client finally starts making money. At that point, we are able to produce neat and carefully detailed invoices for our 10% commission. Cracker, is used to produce a monthly budget, profit/loss forecasts and cash flow predictions which help us to work out whether we're going to survive another financial year. (So far, so good).

The accounts, of course, are the necessary evil of any business. Using a computerised package takes the chore out of the job and leaves us free to be creative. There are a few minor niggles about Sage. It doesn't strike me as being totally compatible with the PCW, but then non-machine specific software very rarely is. It's manual requires at least an 'O' Level in Double Dutch for translation,

Seeing green

Until the day comes when all publishers accept manuscripts on 3" discs in LocoScript format, the only reliable medium available remains the typed or printed double-spaced, single-sided A4 page. Apart from contributing to the massacre of countless square miles of rain forest, paper and printer ribbons constitute one of the major overheads that a business like ours has to contend with. Being masters of the shoe-string budget - as well as environmentally aware- our policy is to keep costs down and save the trees at the same time. To that end, all draft printing is done on the reversed side of all used paper using old ribbons refreshed with a dash of WD40 (one ribbon has lasted nearly two years and is still going strong.) Only when the final perfect copy is ready, do we change to a virgin ribbon and a crisp white ream of A4 paper.

but that again is par for the course.

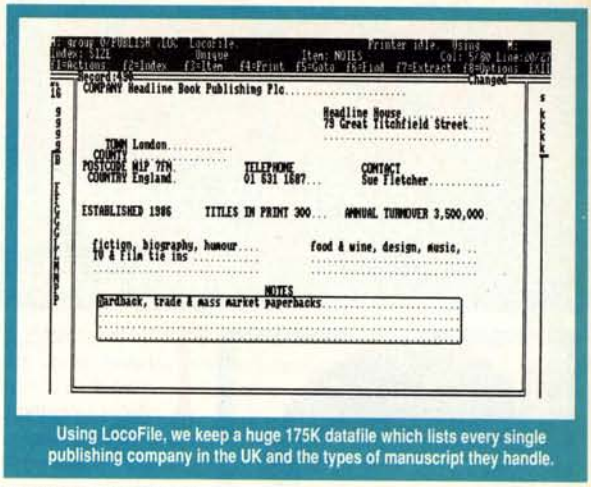
Designs on my desktop

On the more creative side, our more recent software additions, have been Masterscan, Masterpaint and The Desktop Publisher, but I tend to use them more for 'fun' than for business purposes. I found Masterscan a little disappointing. The quality of the scanned images tends to be poor with anything other than very bold line drawings as originals.

Photographs are near to impossible, even photocopied, despite what it says in the advertising. I was less disenchanted with The Desktop Publisher. As a budget graphics system it suits my needs adequately. But I bought it with the intention of producing a letterhead, and in that I was disappointed.

The jagged appearance of larger than default size text spoiled everything I tried to do. Eventually, I gave up and bought LocoFont. Our letterhead is now printed with a coloured ribbon using copperplate style at a fraction of the cost of buying ready made stationery from the local printers.

The main bulk of our work is producing error free copies of clients' manuscripts to send to publishers for consideration. Two of our current clientele own PCWs of their own (an 8256, and a 9512), but most of the new work comes in typed on various machines from portable Silver Reeds, to antique Remingtons.



Using LocoFile, we keep a huge 175K datafile which lists every single publishing company in the UK and the types of manuscript they handle.

Since even the cleanest of text needs some adaptation, we usually have the whole manuscript transcribed to disc immediately, and of course LocoScript comes into its own at that point. We couldn't manage without LocoSpell, and the 'idiot-friendly' disc manager screen is ideal for long novels, with one chapter per file.

Pick and choose

The re-numbering facility in LocoScript 2, which allows an entire book, maybe 300 pages long, spread over thirty or so files, to be re-sequenced in a matter of minutes, is a great time-saver and makes editing so much easier.

The most recent addition to our business software was LocoFile which has proved invaluable.We produced a huge 175k datafile listing every publishing company in Great Britain and the types of manuscript they handle.

From this master file, we can use LocoMail to extract all the publishers who might prove suitable for a particular work and construct smaller individual files specific to each manuscript. From these we can select the publishers most likely to be interested in buying the work. It saves shuffling through dog eared copies of *The Writers' & Artists' Yearbook*, (Yes, literary agencies use it too).

The fact that LocoFile is fully integrated into the LocoScript system was our main reason for selecting it rather than any other more powerful database working separately under CP/M. For our purposes, LocoFile was one of the best buys since LocoScript 2 itself. If they could design a LocoSpread as well, we'd really be rolling.

However, with all the dictionaries and fonts loaded and the main datafile which can't be squashed any more because of lack of memory space, the next investment will probably be a memory upgrade RAM pack.

Thoroughly modern agency

So here we are, getting bigger and better every day. The question is, how big? Eventually of course, it would be nice to have a bright, roomy suite of offices down town with half a dozen VDU operators. They'll all have to know the LocoScript family though.

Despite pressure from those who claim to know better, we're staying with the PCW and LocoScript. I've used several word processing packages including WordStar (on an Amstrad PC), Mini Office (on a BBC Micro), several WordStar clones, and an irritating package called Smart (which I found to be anything but and would gladly burn if I ever see it again) but coming back to LocoScript's friendly Disc Management Screen is like a breath of fresh air.

Unless Amstrad do anything drastic like scrapping production of the 8256, 8512 or 9512, our future plans for the N.S.L.A (by the way any similarity between our initials and a group of Scots subversives is purely accidental) involve a roomful of PCWs. ■

Graphic detail

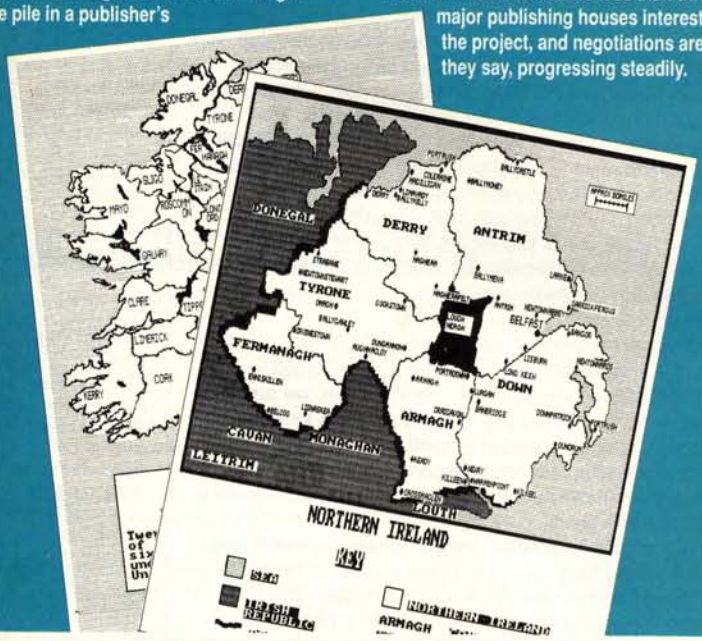
The good name and reputation of the Northern Star Literary Agency has been based mainly on our early successes with crime fiction and children's picture stories. Both are popular types of book, but are also notoriously difficult to place with publishers.

Our first chance to diversify however, was early in 1989, when Geraldine Kennedy came to the Agency with a current affairs manuscript dealing with the recent history of Northern Ireland. A thorny subject about which there are books enough already to fill a large mobile library.

Our problem, was how to make Geraldine's project different enough, and attractive enough to stand out amongst the pile in a publisher's pending tray. One way, was to produce a set of maps and diagrams to illustrate the text.

Geraldine already had The Desk Top Publisher and Masterpack for her PCW8256, so it was a simple matter to draw rough maps on A4 paper, transfer them to the PCW through Masterscan, then tidy them up and add detail with The Desk Top Publisher. Six maps were produced in this way, as well as bar and pie charts to illustrate statistical points, and a stylised drawing for the eventual front cover of the book.

These, along with photographs commissioned from various sources gave exactly the polished, professional effect needed. There are now no less than three major publishing houses interested in the project, and negotiations are, as they say, progressing steadily.



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Access

EVERYMAN

It's not only news-hungry journalists or large companies who use on-line databases; the community at large has a use for them too. Andrew Bibby explores Volnet – a new system for voluntary organisations.

If you recoil in horror at the amount of money you and your family spend each quarter in making phone calls, you may have recoiled still further at the idea that your PCW can be plugged in to your telephone line and used to explore the world of computer communications – Comms.

Even if you've taken the plunge (as an increasing number of PCW users are doing) and equipped yourself with the necessary modem, interface and software, your experience of comms may have been limited to calling up bulletin boards, accessing Prestel, perhaps, or using an electronic mail (E-Mail) service like Telecom Gold – the sort of uses which, if you're sensible, shouldn't boost your phone bills by very much.

Going on-line to search one of the commercial databases – like the Financial Times' Profile database (reviewed in last month's 8000 Plus) – can seem an altogether different matter: something best left to big business, or to the computer enthusiast with more money than sense.

That's not entirely fair however. For example, it's possible to use Profile efficiently, so that even though the on-line charge is typically about £2 a minute – you can get the information you need very quickly. Taking your enquiry to the nearest public library could easily cost you a lot more.

Nevertheless, most commercial databases are set up for business or professional users, and are priced accordingly. As businesses themselves, they're obviously designed to be profit-generating.

Trumpet voluntary

So is it inevitable that on-line databases have to be limited to business users, or to those organisations with money to spend on high access fees? No. At least not according to the people who have recently set up Volnet UK, a new on-line database designed for the 'voluntary sector' – local community organisations and campaigns, self-help groups, advice organisations and charities who also need up-to-date information and who these days are also likely to be computer users.

As is so often the case in the voluntary sector, Volnet has been launched on a low budget, and is relying on grants from trusts and from business sponsorship to get established. It's already attracted considerable goodwill and interest – after all, a lot of people would be pleased to see comms technology used to assist in social as well as commercial objectives. But there have been problems. Although Volnet was officially launched last May, the software took time to set up correctly, and the service has only really been operating since the end of last year. Not surprisingly, only a few people have so far signed up as subscribers.

16,000 records

Volnet is being jointly established by the Volunteer Centre and by Community Projects Foundation (CPF), two independent national charities funded partly by the government to provide resources and support for local initiatives throughout the country. Both parent organisations have substantial libraries of books, newspaper articles and so-called 'grey literature' (informal reports, conference papers and articles in newsletter and small circulation magazines), which they have combined to provide the core of the Volnet database.

What Volnet provides therefore is brief information on some 16,000 separate 'records', each one a publication or article. (The full text isn't available on-line, though Volnet makes it fairly easy to obtain copies of anything you want – see box opposite). Issues covered include voluntary work, youth issues, welfare rights, housing, education, co-operatives, disabilities, the care of the elderly, rural development and much else.

It's altogether a very commendable effort and could potentially help many community groups keep up-to-date with developments. Hopefully it's also the sort of service which could appeal to many PCW users.

But alas – nothing in the comms world is yet as simple as it should be. If you want to access Volnet from a PCW, you may be in for a bit of a challenge.

In fact, at one stage whilst researching this article, it began to look to me as though Volnet was going to be completely impossible to access – and I was all set to tell LocoScript to abandon this edit. Fortunately, the story does have a happier ending – but nevertheless it's a cautionary tale both for PCW users and for the Volnet organisers themselves.

Local vocals

The issue, fundamentally, is that Volnet has had to rely on other people's generosity to get established. For example Cable and Wireless, the parent company of Mercury Communications, have allowed Volnet users free use of their data transmission service Mercury 5000 (the

Help is at phone

Other non-commercial on-line databases set up recently include WIN (Welsh Information Network; more details from Caerphilly/Caerfilli 869224/869111) and SCD-DATA from the Scottish Council in Disability (031 229 8632).

Comm quickly

Mercury Communications are trying to compete with British Telecom in several areas of telephone business, and Mercury 5000 has been set up as a rival for BT's Packet Switch Stream (PSS) service. PSS – and Mercury 5000 – provide a convenient conduit for data communications around the country.

For example, although it's possible to access comms services like Telecom Gold, and indeed Volnet, by dialling up the central computer in London direct, it's usually cheaper and better to go via PSS or Mercury 5000.

This is partly because there is likely to be a 'node' (access point) near you, so that if you live outside London you won't need to pay the full long-distance phone charges you would otherwise incur.

But BT's PSS and Mercury 5000 operate through dedicated lines which only carry data communications – so that there is a much better chance of your data being transmitted and received without corruption.

Of course, your comms messages will still have to use the ordinary phone lines from your home to the nearest node. Even if you use Mercury 5000 for accessing Volnet, BT will act as carriers for this part of the journey.

equivalent of BT's PSS – Packet Switch Stream) – which means that users can access Volnet for the cost of a local phone call to their nearest Mercury 5000 'node' (access point). Even W H Smith have chipped in, contributing 1000 free folders for the manual.

The problem for us PCW users is that Volnet also talked nicely to the North London Polytechnic, who agreed that the database could be held on its mainframe, for only a minimal charge. The North London Polytechnic, needless to say, takes its computing seriously and has equipped itself with a cluster of four VAX computers (together comprising a 'midi' computer) made by the DEC company. To be able to communicate with the North London Polytechnic, the remote computer – in our case the PCW – has to pretend to be a VAX terminal itself, or at least to behave in the same way as VAX terminals behave. This is what's known as 'terminal emulation', and it's something which is normally carried out without fuss by the comms software.

Unfortunately, the North London Polytechnic's computer uses VT100 emulation – and this terminal emulation is not normally provided by the usual PCW comms software.

For example, Dialup, a popular choice for many PCW comms users, happily got me into the Volnet section of the North London Polytechnic computer – but it wasn't able to make any sense of what the VAX then sent back: the screen rapidly filled with garbage. Sagesoft said that their ChitChat software only handled VT100 emulation for PC-compatibles, not for the PCW range.

The folks at Database Software, responsible for the comprehensive Mini Office Professional package, weren't sure whether the comms part of the software handled VT100 emulation or not – and after reading the manual I don't know for sure either. However, unless any MOP-using comms enthusiasts reading this can prove otherwise, the evidence seems to suggest that it can't.

Finally, I turned to the COMM+ program, an involved piece of software which claims to be usable on over 100 different types of computer, and which – probably because of its complexity – hasn't attracted much interest so far from PCW users. In fact, Andrew Margolis of Margolis and Co, the person responsible for the software, seemed to have almost given up on ever making PCW sales when I first spoke to him, muttering darkly about sending out more PCW review copies to computer magazines than he'd made sales.

But game for a challenge, Andrew Margolis decided to do his best to prove that the PCW could be put on-line to Volnet – and a few days later a specially amended version of the basic COMM+ software arrived. Thanks to his efforts I can confirm that Volnet is, after all, within reach from a PCW.

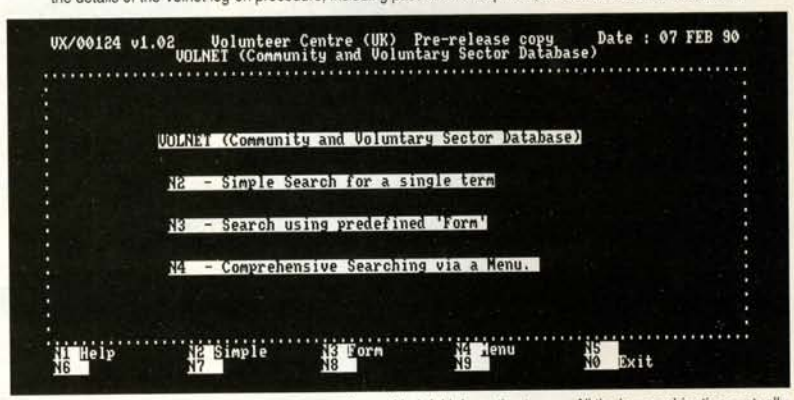
The market leader?

Andrew Margolis says that he will provide the extra Volnet option with copies of COMM+ to anyone who requests it when ordering the software from him (it's also possible that the Volnet organisers themselves may later arrange to include it as part of a package deal for PCW users). In fairness, it has to be said that COMM+ wouldn't necessarily be first choice as software for newcomers to the comms world – it is certainly complicated. (The version quickly lashed up for me also had a number of bugs which would need to be sorted out before the additional Volnet option was commercially marketed.)

But until the other software houses decide to adapt their PCW comms packages to include VT100 emulation, COMM+ looks, at the moment, as though it's got the Volnet market to itself.

The question is – technical considerations apart – how many community organisations and individuals will decide to use Volnet, especially if they are not currently using their computers for comms at all. Volnet has deliberately kept its cost low (local groups and individuals can join for £25 + VAT though national agencies and government departments are charged rather more). Unusually, too, there is no access charge for using Volnet – which means that,thanks to the Mercury 5000 link, the only cost will be the price of a local-rate phone call.

The specially created COMM+ package with VT100 emulation. You won't be able to log-on to Volnet without it. This shows the details of the Volnet log-on procedure, including passwords and phone, emulation and other essentials.



Into Volnet for real this time. This screen will open vistas of helpful information to you. All the key combinations actually mean that you should press [EXIT] followed by the relevant number. Thanks are due to the North London Polytechnic.

More details about Volnet can be obtained from Jenny Harman, The Volunteer Centre, 29 Lower Kings Rd, Berkhampstead, Herts HP4 2AB (0442 873311) or from Community Projects Foundation, 60 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AD (01-226 5375)

If you would like to log-on to Volnet but don't have the right software (and who does?) you can get more information, and maybe even obtain a Volnet compatible version of Comm+, from Margolis and Co at 51E Guildford Street, London WC1N 1ES (01-278 3032). COMM+ costs £75 plus VAT. ■

Booked and sent off

Volnet is a bibliographical database, which means that it carries details about books and articles – the author, publisher, date of publication, number of pages and a short abstract of the contents – but not the complete text.

If you find a reference to an article using Volnet and decide you want to read it, the Volunteer Centre and Community Projects Foundation are offering photocopies for a nominal 50p each by post. (If the books are not in print they can be obtained from the British Library lending section).

This is perhaps not an entirely satisfactory arrangement, and Volnet have promised to replace it with an on-line ordering service, as soon as the software can be rewritten and copyright problems sorted out. It will then be possible for Volnet users to automatically arrange for articles they are interested in to be posted to them – similar to the response frame system on Prestel, for example.

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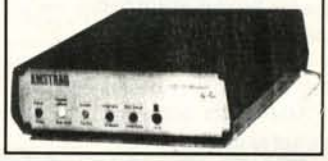

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FOR GREEN AND COUNTRY

Green, the new game from Classic Software, deals with things ecological. New-man, Tim Smith, gives it the twice-over.

GREEN

£12.00 ● Classic Software ● 12 Manor Drive, Stewkley, Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 0JE

It wasn't too long ago that to be green meant either a particularly bad channel crossing or the sight of someone else's Fabergé egg. Now, however, if you're not Green then you're just plain mean. Classic Software have picked up on this with an eco-drama game which balances strategy and violence and is set in a forest .

At-issue, at-issue!

The game sees you as a kind of ecological guerilla. You are in a forest which, like too many others, is being chopped into matchwood by lumberjacks whose favourite film appears to be *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Unlike other games where you play against the clock, in Green you play against Global Warming; the more trees felled, the hotter the atmosphere. Not only this but the lumberjacks will stop at nothing, you included, to get their quota of timber. They will kill you if they find you. So the answer's simple, do it to them before they do it to you. Except that it's not that simple at all. You also have a stock of Morality Points to maintain and killing an axe-wielding, tartan-shirt-wearing lunatic will devastate your moral standing. So at least we know that you're a goody.

Tree's company

What can you do? Several things actually. You can set traps by digging holes and covering these with branches. As the manual so cuttingly puts it, "Once a lumberjack has fallen into a trap, it is no longer a trap. It is a hole with a man in it" and you can't argue with that. However, as the program also states, "Be careful not to bury lumberjacks alive as this could have a serious effect on your morality."

Other weapons at your disposal are your trusty spade, although it is inadvisable for obvious reasons to use this in your defence. You might even, at a pinch, use an axe. The best strategy overall is to try to outrun the foe. This is theoretically possible by pressing [SHIFT] in concert with the movement keys. Here lies the rub. You move by use of the [z] and [x] keys for left and right and the [m] and [k] for up and down. This takes some getting used to if you have previously used the cursor keys or the more traditional [o],[p],[q],[a] key combination on other games.

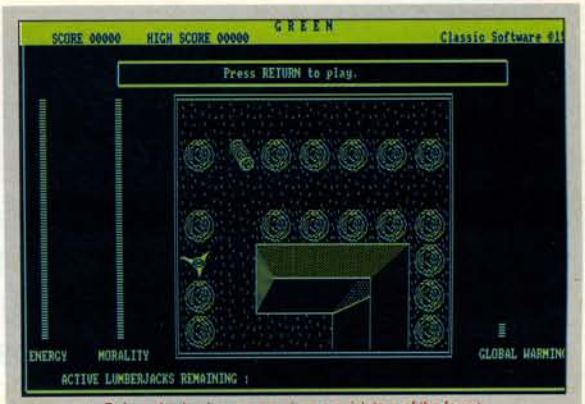
For some reason, probably the number of times the keyboard is scanned by the program, the reaction of movement to keypress is slow. Pressing [SHIFT] when approached by the enemy means that you only stop for a second before hurtling off. And unless you move around with the [SHIFT] key permanently depressed, you have no chance of outrunnning anyone. The Catch 22 here is that if you run everywhere you tend to miss turnings.

Leaf well alone

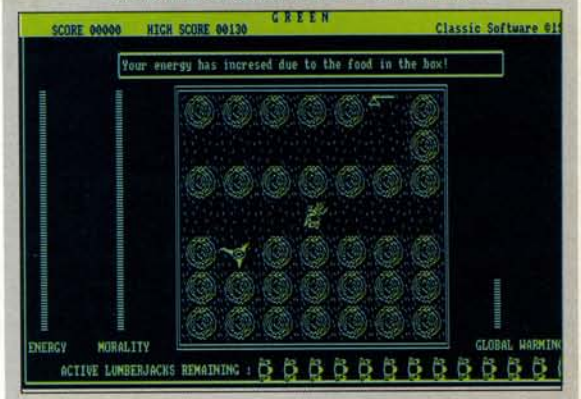
So far it sounds bad for the Green guerilla goodies. But help is at hand. One of your colleagues has hidden a charge of TNT. It is your task to plant this near the lumberjacks' hut and detonate it. This is not to kill the chaps but merely to remove their warmth, comfort and thick sock supply. Once this has been achieved, the hope is that they will vacate the forest.

Again life is not easy and the lumberjacks will look for the TNT. If they find it before you do, things really will start to get complicated. You find yourself building traps, running in all directions with that Global Warming increasing in front of your eyes.

According to the game specifications, Green should be a strategy outing. The only real problem is that everything tends to happen too fast. It's hard to be truly effective when you feel your control is limited. The interesting point here is that there is a kind of perverse addictiveness to the game. After a while, you work up such a true-blue (or rather true-Green) hatred for the lumberjacks who keep on popping out at you from anywhere and everywhere, that you find yourself playing it for hours. ■



Before play begins you are given a quick tour of the forest. You'll find it helps to keep your eyes peeled for the positioning of useful items such as spades, lunch boxes and branches



With all this running around in the open air, you will soon find you need lots of energy. To gain this you must find, and pick-up (and presumably eat?), the occasional lunchboxes which are scattered around the place.

Ooops! Now you really do have a problem. The lumberjack is trolling off with the charge, so you will have to lay some pretty heavy traps and hope the wood sprites smile on you and not him ... otherwise all is lost.

IN A NUTSHELL

At the outset, Green is irritating, quick and impossible to win. Persevere and this changes. Before you know it, you become obsessed with defeating the blood-thirsty lumberjacks. At £12.00 it is far from over-priced. Not really an essential buy but certainly not one to sully the PCW software hoard. Fast, fun – play it.

GREEN			
GRAPHICS	4/5	CHALLENGE	4/5
ATMOSPHERE	3/5	ADDICTIVENESS	4/5
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT		15/20	

THE WORDSMITHS

Just what are the word processing alternatives to LocoScript and Protext – and how feasible are they? Sharon Bradley, Tim Smith and a few 8000 Plus readers find out

Travelling ten miles in the wind and rain to buy a Big Mac and chips when you have an excellent cordon bleu restaurant on your front doorstep doesn't, it has to be confessed, make a whole lot of sense.

And yet, thoughts such as this will doubtless be fleeting across the minds of a nation of PCW users as they draw up a chair in front of the fire with the latest copy of 8000 Plus to read this very article. Who are we trying to kid? Are there really any viable alternatives to LocoScript and Protext.

Here at 8000 Plus, we're used to lauding the qualities and denigrating the shortcomings of the two most popular word processing programs for the PCW: LocoScript and Protext. And we fall naturally into the trap of assuming that if a PCW user is not using one, he will certainly be using the other.

LocoScript had the advantage of arriving part and parcel of the PCW package, rising to instant stardom as it catered immediately and with a minimum of fuss to the needs of the hesitant word processing new comer. Faultless Gilmour direction and effortless layouts confirmed LocoScript 1, and its younger successor LocoScript 2, as the darlings of PCW owners – almost everywhere.

Then came Protext; its appeal supplanted the native charm of LocoScript for those turbo-charged PCW owners who were less interested in producing perfectly-tailored letters than they were concerned about spinning off the pages of their latest novel. Efficient scrolling (essential for getting from one end to another of those steamy chapters quickly) and an at-the-drop-of-a-hat word count more than made up for its renownedly obfuscatory documentation.

The old ones are the best

Yet despite the obvious advantages of these programs, companies like Arnor and Database continued to 'treat' the PCW market with new word processing software. Pocket Protext and the word processing module of Mini Office Professional were cases in point. And, surprising though it no doubt sounds, there are PCW owners out there who have rejected the non-CP/M, all-in-one-package appeal of LocoScript and the sheer density of Protext in favour of old and trusted industry standards – like WordStar and its younger cousin NewWord. Sometimes the familiarity of a particular package can be its most enticing feature.

But what sort of facilities are going to make a word processor a winner? Then again, it depends on the application that you have in mind for it. If your PCW is confined to working within a purely administrative context, the ease with which it can produce attractive professional-looking letters and reports is bound to be a major consideration. That – and its ability to carry out the heaviest mail-merge operation smoothly and efficiently, with a minimum amount of intervention from you.

If, on the other hand, you use your PCW at home, within the confines of your own study, to write a thesis or a book, you will probably find the software's stylistic capabilities relatively unimportant. It's ability, on the other hand, to scroll quickly from one end of a long document to another, coupled with an up-to-the-minute word-count and excellent Search options is far more likely to prove itself indispensable.

So just what are the alternatives to the long-acknowledged favourites and why do some PCW owners steadfastly refuse to abandon them? Let's take a look.

TASWORD 8000

£24.95 ● Tasman ● 0532 438301 ● 8000s only

Roy Milliken

Roy Milliken from Long Eaton in Surrey is a firm Tasword devotee. As Editor of a regular society newsletter, he graduated from typewriter and Gestetner duplicator to PCW and photocopier. He applied himself to learning the delights of his machine's native word processor, LocoScript 1, and it quickly became an indispensable tool. His decision to upgrade to LocoScript 2 was, he says, an unfortunate one.

'I just couldn't get on with the program's hopelessly illogical [f2] Layout menu. I had grown so used to LocoScript 1 that I found the differences between the two programs very frustrating. It's written at the start of session 11 in the LocoScript 2 User Guide 'Note for LocoScript 1 users: LocoScript 2 Layouts work n a very different way from the Layouts you are used to.' How right they were!'

Roy began using Tasword on the recommendation of his local software dealer who had always used it in his business. And although he admits that it took a little time to get used to, and that it has its quirks, he's stuck with it ever since. So what makes Tasword work for him?

POCKET PROTEXT

£29.95 ● Arnor ● 0733 68909

The full-blown version of Protext is the standard word processor here in the 8000 Plus office. We use it for its speed and the ability it provides to get in and out of CP/M quickly and without fuss. Its little brother/sister Pocket Protext will provide all of the mainstay word processing tools, from cutting and pasting, finding and exchanging to formatting pages and Near Letter Quality printing. Headers and footers can be created and modified and it is possible to create your own character sets using the SYM command.

So what's the difference between Protext and Pocket Protext? The most major one must be £30.00 – Protext in its full version goes for £59.95. Missing from Pocket Protext are the spell-checker, mail-merging facilities, Box and Typewriter modes.

Unless you are preparing to carry out some extremely heavy-duty word processing – running an office or club for example – you will probably not miss any of these. The spell-checking option might appear to be quite a loss, but then again Pocket Protext does come equipped with a word counter, one of the main uses of spell-checkers on the PCW, so this may well compensate for that lack. Equally it is very rare for any PCW word processor to arrive with a full spell checker,

Well, the program arrives with an extensive disc-bound tutor. Rather like an estate agent, this takes you on a guided tour of the house and its features. There are, for example, 21 different commands for moving the cursor around alone.

Cursors!

As Roy points out, 'It's unlikely that anyone will take the trouble to learn all of them, but it is handy to be able to go to the start of the document, the end, or a page or line number in the middle. And because the program works wholly in memory, it is very fast.' Tasword has no document template facility like LocoScript, an absence that Roy regards more as a help than a hindrance. In Tasword, a document's layout is determined using a)the ruler line at the bottom of the screen, b)the printer control characters and c)the print menu. The first decides fundamental layout details like where the margins and tabs are to be positioned. The second determines the size and style of the typeface to be used, while the third, which is displayed on the screen at the time of printing, allows you a number of options: which line-spacing to use, whether to print page numbers and, if so, where.

Comments Roy, 'Document planning is so simple and straightforward with Tasword; you just concentrate on the text you are going to produce.'

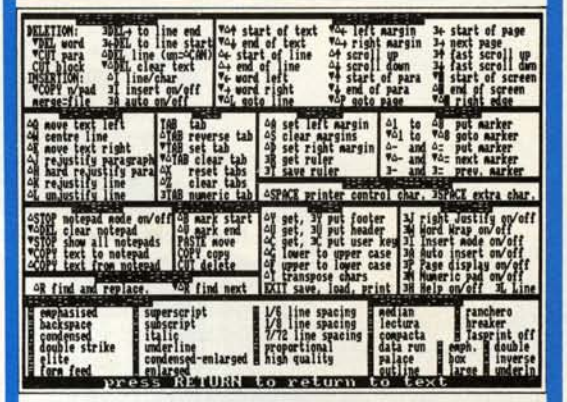
Mark my word!

Tasword incorporates a useful and comprehensive marker system which enables you to automatically go to any point in your text file. For instance, if you are writing your next best seller, you could put a number marker (they go from 0 to 9) at each chapter head. Dash markers also come into operation if you wish to mark a certain point in the text for inserting further information at a later date.

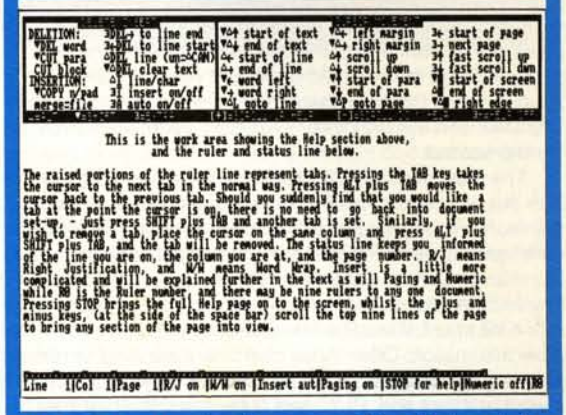
As Roy points out, 'There is also an efficient Search and Find/Replace facility. On pressing [ALT] and [R] together, you are presented with a small menu asking you to enter the word to be found or replaced and whether case is to be ignored or not. You are then prompted for the substitute text. Replacement text can be anything up to 80 characters long and the program will ask you if you want to be (S)elective in the replacement. Alternatively, you can replace (A)ll occurrences of the word. If you choose (S)elective, the program will stop at each occurrence of the word and ask you if you want to replace it. It's a very useful facility.'

Inevitably, there are some things that Roy doesn't like about the program. For example, he doesn't like the way in which it takes you straight into the document editing screen instead of accessing it via the opening menu. Neither is it possible to go straight to the CP/M A> prompt from within the program. And, as is the case with LocoScript 2 and LocoSpell, unexpanded 8256 owners might find space a tight commodity when Tasword is up and running alongside its spell checker, Tas-spell.

But on the whole, Roy is happy with Tasword and plans to keep on using it in preference to LocoScript 2. He has found that its mailmerge and label-printing abilities more than make up for its occasional shortcoming. Concludes Roy, 'For those who are perfectly satisfied with the good old dot-matrix printer, Tasword is a most useful and easy program to learn and use – and it doesn't cost an arm and a leg.'



Tasword's help screen; it might look cramped but it's certainly informative



Your working area - complete with ever-present help and, below, ruler line

TASWORD 8000

DOCUMENTATION	3/5	RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5
EASE OF USE	4/5	PERFORMANCE	4/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 15/20

especially at under £30.00.

Although the manual would have you believe that Pocket Protext cannot handle EXEC (executable) files, this is, thankfully, not true. EXEC files are one of the more powerful features of Protext. They allow you to set up key definitions at the start-of-day, create phrase files and generally automate your working practices in a fairly simple and straightforward manner.

Pocket Protext works from the 'command line', unlike LocoScript which makes use of menus. It's a subjective question as to which you prefer, but purely on the basis of speed, Pocket Protext is ahead.

Forming columns

The Box function which we mentioned earlier on is most useful when you need to print in columns – a perennial request in the Tipoffs pages. Its omission from Pocket Protext again points to the fact that this stripped down version is aimed mainly at the letter writer, student, programmer in fact anyone who wants to get words on disc and paper and can live without fancy frills .

As for the lack of mail merging facilities; the ability to create round-robin letters or circulars with information automatically inserted from data files, this might appear fairly dramatic at first. But the average user, the person who works from home or school will never have a need for such an official form of document.

Basically then, Pocket Protext sets out to be a fast, no nonsense word processor. You can still make use of the Calculation function – to tot up bank balances, do the pools or as an aid to programming and the access it allows to CP/M remains as unbeatable as the full version.

Above, Pocket Protext's edit screen is not much different to its big brother. Saving a file is as easy as typing one letter. Right, one of Pocket Protext's famous EXEC files in action. It automatically sets you up from the start of day disc.

POCKET PROTEXT

DOCUMENTATION	4/5	RANGE OF FEATURES	3/5
EASE OF USE	5/5	PERFORMANCE	5/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 17/20

Annette Dougal

WORDSTAR
Second hand only

Bristol-based computer consultant, Annette Dougal, has been using WordStar for a long time; she says she finds it 'comfortable – like coming back to an old pair of slippers.' And while it might sound odd to hear a user referring to a program in such affectionate terms, it has to be remembered that WordStar is generally regarded as being the industry standard as far as word processing is concerned.

Though it is a far less intuitive package to get to grips with than LocoScript, millions of people continue to use it on business micros that outprice the PCW many times over. As Annette comments, 'If your company is one of those using WordStar, that could be a big enough reason for buying a copy of it for your PCW. Until LocoScript conquers the IBM-compatible market, it makes sense to use the same package at home and at work. If you use Cardbox or dBASE II, you will find that they share many of the same commands as WordStar and it is fairly easy to transfer information from them to the word processor.'

The good news is that there's practically nothing you can't do with this program – provided you know the relevant code or command. This is the tricky part. Says Annette, 'WordStar's commands are entered in two ways: as control characters or as dot commands. Control characters require you to hold down the [ALT] key and then press a key or series of keys. Dot commands begin with a full stop followed by two characters and possibly a number or other information. Often these characters are easy to remember; for example, pressing [ALT] and [F] together moves the cursor forward a word at a time and .PL70 sets a page length at 70 lines.'

These two-letter commands are generally used to control top and bottom margins, headers, footers and printing formats.

Helpful screens

WordStar will not prove particularly taxing for someone who is not interested in exploiting the program's more advanced features. The learning curve, however, soon becomes quite steep.

Learning the commands can be a problem and the manual is not particularly helpful. WordStar does provide, however, a lot of help through a series of very comprehensive menus. Observes Annette, 'The Help Menu is a mine of information, giving clear and detailed explanations of many of the program's commands, including margins and tabs, dot commands and print controls. The Onscreen Menu tells you how to control the layout of your text, as well as showing whether fetures such as justification are activated or not. The Block Menu deals with block commands, and file and disc management.'

WordStar's document editing screen in full flow showing the highest and most detailed level (3) of help menus

We asked Annette if there were any ways in which WordStar was an improvement on LocoScript. She particularly liked the way in which the [RETURN] and [ENTER] keys are interchangeable. You can also switch off the program's Insert mode and type over current text, making editing a much simpler operation. 'Having said that,' adds Annette, 'WordStar has no automatic relay facility. You must press [RELAY] or [ALT] and [B] together to reflow each paragraph. Plus, margins might be easier to change with WordStar, but they aren't saved with the document and, consequently, have to be reset each time.'

One of the principal criticisms that Annette levelled at the program concerned its use of the PCW's special keys. Not all of them are used, while some are capable of producing very bewildering functions indeed. 'Take the [CAN] key: WordStar uses this as the Save and continue key, while pressing [PARA] produces the same reaction as LocoScript's [TAB].'

Annette's final verdict? 'WordStar was my first computer love. However, if you are a newcomer to word processing or have bought a PCW without knowing WordStar, I would, objectively, recommend LocoScript without hesitation. It is easier to use, makes full use of the screen and keyboard, and is much faster.'

WORDSTAR

DOCUMENTATION	3/5	RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5
EASE OF USE	3/5	PERFORMANCE	4/5
8000 PLUS VERDICT 14/20			

Customising WordStar

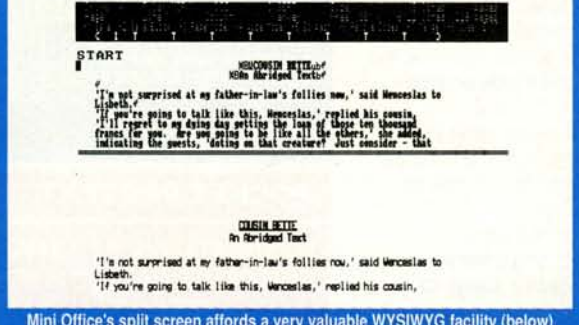
WordStar has an associated mailing list program and spelling checker, MailMerge and SpellStar. If you require a particular utility which isn't included in the Star family of software (for example, there's no word counter) there is an in-built facility to enable you to run external programs. Add any CP/M-based programs to your WordStar disc – provided that there's room.

MINI OFFICE PROFESSIONAL
£39.95 ● Database Software ● 0625 878888

Mini Office Professional's word processing package is just one of the five modules that this comprehensive suite of programs offers the PCW user. Past dealings with the program, which have featured time and time again in the pages of the magazine, have revealed that where it is good, it tends to be very good; where it is not so good, on the other hand, it is absolutely lousy.

One advantage that it can offer is its ability to function as part of an integrated whole – hand in hand with the database module, in particular. But, although Mini Office's mailmerge facility is an extremely powerful feature of the package as a whole, it would be misleading to suggest that it can match the polish and efficiency of a package like LocoMail.

The word processor works in a very different way to its LocoScript rival. This means, inevitably, that you're going to have to spend a little time getting to know your way around it. Although Mini Office's commands are nowhere near as arcane-sounding as, say, WordStar's (faint traces of logic can be detected after a while), they are still very far removed from



Mini Office's split screen affords a very valuable WYSIWYG facility (below)

The word count: press [EXTRA] and [A] to find out the damage

Book it now!

The accompanying Mini Office documentation from Database has always, justifiably, had a lousy reputation. The good news is that included with every package of the latest Mini Office there will be a revised version of the best guide around for it, All In One Business Computing by John Hughes. It is nothing short of excellent; every MOP user should have one.

Peter Philippson

NEWWORD

£69.00 ● Newstar Software ● 0245 265017

Peter Philippson works at the Manchester Gestalt Centre and has been using NewWord for some years now. His main reason for plumping for this package was that LocoScript 1 was too slow, LocoScript 2 and Protext had not been released and that he had been using WordStar.

Before the PCW hit the world, the nearest to a standard wordprocessing system for the IBM machines was WordStar. NewWord is accepted as being a clone of this standard. Using commands from the keyboard and menu instead of pull-down menu systems where you cursor from one option to the next, or Protext's command line structure, NewWord offers separate menus which provide a number of [ALT]+letter commands. These can be entered easily as you are typing, a facility which appealed no end to Peter as a touch typist.

"NewWord's key combinations are designed to be typed quickly without moving your hands rather than for ease of remembering. It is basically an extension of touch-typing. Similarly, NewWord has a margin release command to temporarily change the length of the line without having to adjust the margins – I use it to put in margin numbers." Once you are used to the command structure, this ability to keep working speeds up the entire process of writing.

Peter comments that "I found the conditional mail-merge and ability to support other printers very useful. I also like the sheer amount of on-screen help available and its unobtrusiveness if you don't want it."

There are three levels of help available depending on your experience and requirements. Once you have conquered the rather American manual ('You're doing great!' messages abound) you will probably find that you only need help level 1 – the least.

Easy header

Another feature of the program which attracted Peter was the way in which it deals with file-handling. Unlike any other system, NewWord " ... has a sophisticated use of User numbers and extends CP/M in two ways; first of all, each disc is divided into 32 User numbers (the PCW implementation of CP/M+ only allows for 15 User Groups). Secondly, it is easy to move between them, and, say, copy a file from disc A: User 24 into a file in disc B: User 17 just by typing [ALT]+K+R and, at the prompt, A24:FILENAME. Furthermore, the R command from the opening menu allows commands in one user number to be used in data in another. For example WC.COM (the word counter) from User 24 can be used to deal with a file in User group 15. "

As well as all this, the software also " has multi-line headers and footers, unlike Protext and unlike LocoScript they can just be typed in with a dot command in front".

Overall, NewWord will probably feel alien to the LocoScript user, but for the touch-typist and for someone prepared to learn their way into a powerful system, it should pay dividends.

It looks like WordStar, it feels like WordStar - but, by golly, it's NewWord's opening screen

Creating a document in NewWord; the rather strange key combinations become second nature after a while

NEWWORD

DOCUMENTATION	3/5	RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5
EASE OF USE	4/5	PERFORMANCE	4/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 15/20

the relative pick-and-point clarity of a LocoScript menu. [SHIFT] [ALT] [B], for example, will turn bold on, while [ALT] [B] turns it off again – and so on.

Splitting image

One advantage that Mini Office's word processor does have over LocoScript is its word counter – an absolutely essential requirement for journalists and novelists alike. All you have to do is press [EXTRA] and [A] any time to get the count displayed instantly on screen.

Another extremely powerful feature of Mini Office's word processor that LocoScript doesn't have is its split screen. Press [f3] while in Edit mode and the screen will divide itself into two. The document that you were working on is retained in the first, top half; the bottom half, on the other hand, shows how the same document will look after printing, together with headers, footers, page numbers, stylistic alterations – and so on.

This WYSIWYG feature is a very important one as it allows you a sneak preview of your finished output without actually going to the trouble of printing it out. If you don't like what you see, make the appropriate alterations to the document under Edit mode and press the [RELAY] key to see them in operation in the second screen.

There is a similar Preview option under Print mode, your last chance of checking that everything is as it should be before you print out. Again, the document is typed to the screen before it is printed out.

Mini Office is also very fast; you can zip effortlessly from one end of a 100-page document to the other in just a few seconds. This is another area in which this word processor manages to score lots of brownie points over LocoScript.

Despite these advantages, Mini Office's word processor feels distinctly less robust on handling than LocoScript does. It always did harbour a strange predilection for crashing inexplicably at incredibly inopportune times, and Database's recent attempts to make the module more attractive by incorporating a thesaurus and spell checker did little to boost confidence.

Still, as you will all have read in the news pages of even more recent issues of 8000 Plus, these disastrous additions have finally been laid to rest once and for all. The good news is that the version of Mini Office Professional (or perhaps we should say Mini Office Professional Plus) currently available is the old one – and, very definitely, the best.

MINI OFFICE

DOCUMENTATION	5/5	RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5
EASE OF USE	4/5	PERFORMANCE	4/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 17/20

Keys of the door

One small comment about the rather strange, at first, key combinations in NewWord, "Although,' says Peter, ' I took some time to learn them, I can understand the rationale. I am a touch-typist and don't want to be moving my fingers too much off their normal position. The commands are designed to minimise this movement. Commands are usually of the form: Left hand on [ALT], right hand on K, O or P then often followed by a left hand key. This is quick and easy to do, rather than Protext's [ALT]+X for print commands. The [alt]+Q (quick menu) command is an exception and this is useful since it is less easy to trigger a powerful command by mistake.'

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BOOK LOOK

Driving instruction for technology tamers, reviewed by Rob Ainsley

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by John Campbell
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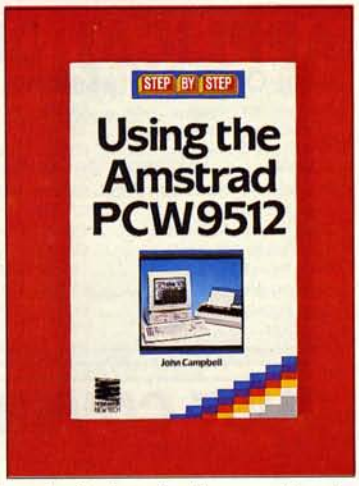


It is a truth universally acknowledged that too many computer experts assume we are already familiar with the subject they are supposedly explaining to us, and at best impress, at worst confuse, without managing to enlighten in either case. What most of us want when we get a PCW is not a deep understanding of LocoScript's menu structure — it's which keys to press in order to write a letter.

Some technical terms have to be learnt, of course; David Langford quotes the impatient learner driver in their first lesson. "This is the clutch," says the instructor, "this is the accelerator, and this is the steering wheel..."

"Shut up and stop trying to confuse me with technical jargon!" shouts the learner. "I just want to learn how to drive a car, OK?"

John Campbell — like a good driving instructor — strikes an excellent balance between telling you what to do, what keys to press, what to watch for and so on, and trying to explain what is going on to enable you to understand the workings of your PCW, to make it a tool of predictable workings rather than a magic box of tricks.

For example, he takes a whole page to tell you how to start up LocoScript, giving the fine details of turning the mains switch on and taking the LocoScript disc out of its clear plastic case. Overkill? Certainly not. I can start my car virtually in my sleep now, but when I started to drive I needed someone to tell me exactly when to switch on and when to put the clutch in.

The book is basically formatted in little one- or two- page chunks: copying a disc, printing words underlined, changing the margins, changing the print wheel, interpreting the text screen and so on. Each chunk is written to be comprehensible by itself, without reference to other sections.

Like many books designed for the typist converting to word processing, direct printing is covered before word processing, though the modular nature of the book means you don't have to read it through from start to finish. Indeed, Campbell notes rather dryly in the preface that the story line is too thin for that. Whether his preference is for creative writing or office tuition (his background) I don't know, but he has a clear idea of what beginners find confusing and what 'obvious' questions they ask.

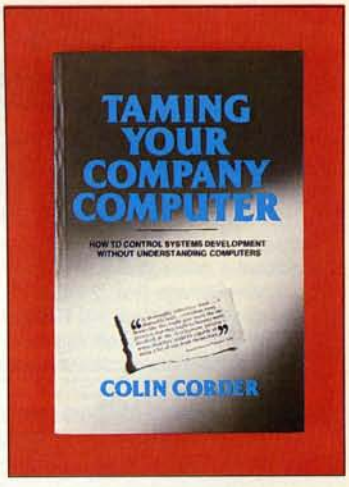
An excellent book, and for any newcomer to word processing who's just got hold of a 9512 — whether upwardly mobile typist, budding business person getting technologised or just beginner at home — you'll find nothing clearer or more useful. ■

ISBN 0 - 434 - 90201 - 2

VALUE FOR MONEY 5/5

TAMING YOUR COMPANY COMPUTER

by Colin Corner
£13.95 ● McGraw-Hill ● 06 2823431



Anyone who in a book on computer systems in business can quote among others Galbraith, Moliere, Kipling, Goethe, Shaw and Hippocrates, who can illuminate his ideas with diagrams showing the grave of Richard I in Fontevraud, in the Loire Valley, and whose preface is a paean to the book by Sir Anthony Jay (co-author of Yes, Minister and Yes, Prime Minister) probably has something nteresting to say.

Colin Corner's book is one of the few computer publications I have ever read that genuinely communicates information and theory in an illuminating and interesting way: not by the sort of sub-Python humour employed by some technical writers (you know the sort of thing: waffle on mail merging is accompanied by an address list of people with ridiculous names in an effort to keep you reading) but by sound and witty reference to an equivalent concept. The Richard I grave business is a clear way of explaining the top-down nature of system documentation; read the book if you don't believe me.

The sub-title — 'how to control systems development without understanding computers' — might seem rather irrelevant to PCW owners. Systems development, on a PCW?

In fact the book has plenty to offer the PCW owning business person. 'System', after all, can mean anything from a thousand networked IBM PC 386s to a single PCW 8256 running an accounts or DTP package. Either way the person ultimately responsible for making it work for the company must know when it's working and when it isn't – and this book gives the business-minded a thorough grounding in what a computer system should be doing, without technospeak or irrelevant jargonistic showing-off.

Of course, if you are considering a network or an 'advanced' computer system at your workplace (and PCWs can now be networked, via the Cirtech Diamond Hard Disc) by possibly upgrading from or adding to your PCW, then you'll get the full benefit of the material. But even if you're just using the PCW to do a bit of accounting for your one-man-and-dog outfit, there will be plenty for you here.

The secret of the book is that Corner continually asks, and answers, the sort of questions people are often afraid to ask of computer systems because they think they're being stupid, and they should understand more of what's going on 'under the bonnet'. Does it work? Is this the most effective use of the resources? Is this genuinely a cost-effective way to organise computing power into the accounting procedure? And so on.

Taming Your Company Computer isn't just another potboiler. It's readable, clear-minded, and full of sound business thinking. And it really does help you tame the technology and make it work for you in the most efficient way. ■

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FREE FOR ALL

Dr Des Keenan gives a personal overview of three free-form databases

It's a well-known problem for computer software users that you can't know whether a particular package will suit your own purposes until you actually try it – and to try it you have to buy it. You can read the adverts, of course, and then wait for the review in 8000 Plus, but this doesn't always work.

I write books on Irish history, which involves years of note-collecting in places such as libraries and archives. For writing, I use a PCW and for note collection a Cambridge Z88, linked to the PCW with C-Port software.

But what to do about the indispensable card index? My notes are pretty formless, so don't work with a database which requires a pre-set format.

Ansible answer

An indexing program for my LocoScript notes seemed a good solution. I'd used AnsibleIndex for my previous books, and found it excellent and very easy to use. The program will carry out an index on any number of discs, as long as you leave enough space to save the index file on the last one.

The second edition is even simpler to use. It's menu-driven, which means no exasperating CP/M commands; and you don't have to check the directory every time you forget how you abbreviated a chapter name. By temporarily renaming chapters numerically you can automatically index a disc for an entire book.

The index has been expanded to cope with anything a PCW user could possibly need. You can get over 5,000 entries on the 8512. The index of a manuscript can be adapted for the printed book, provided that your publishers make no substantial changes. You can index words, phrases and inverted phrases. The manual is logical and easy to follow. No setting up is needed as the copy of the master disc autoboots.

The only problem seems to be that, though AnsibleIndex is excellent for a finished piece, it doesn't work so well when you're adding notes each day. Because the index is in one piece, if you add or omit a page you have to index every file from the start. This really wasn't what I wanted so, after reading the adverts and reviews carefully, I decided to invest in Chibase.

Chibase

The program is on a disc, and comes with a ring-bound manual which is the best thing about it. The user then has to put together two program discs and a data disc; some of the instructions for this are in the manual and some in a Read Me file which has to be printed out.

If you get anything wrong, you go back to square one by re-formatting all three discs. It appears that the discs have to be squeaky-clean or you get an error message. I once used a disc with one small file on it and this apparently invalidated some vital step in the installation procedure.

It took me nearly four hours to manage the installation and get the Sort facility to load. I also had to guess what size my final index was going to be, although there is a way to change it if the guess is wrong.

These hurdles over, I began to explore its possibilities. You can, apparently, index your LocoScript notes, but at this stage I found I had to return to LocoScript, create a page image of the file to be indexed, and transfer this to a prepared data disc. There's a lot more that I never got round to working out. This is because the page image file can only be put onto Chibase a screenful at a time, each screenful making a separate record. It was easier to fill in the records directly to start with.

Sort, sharp shocks

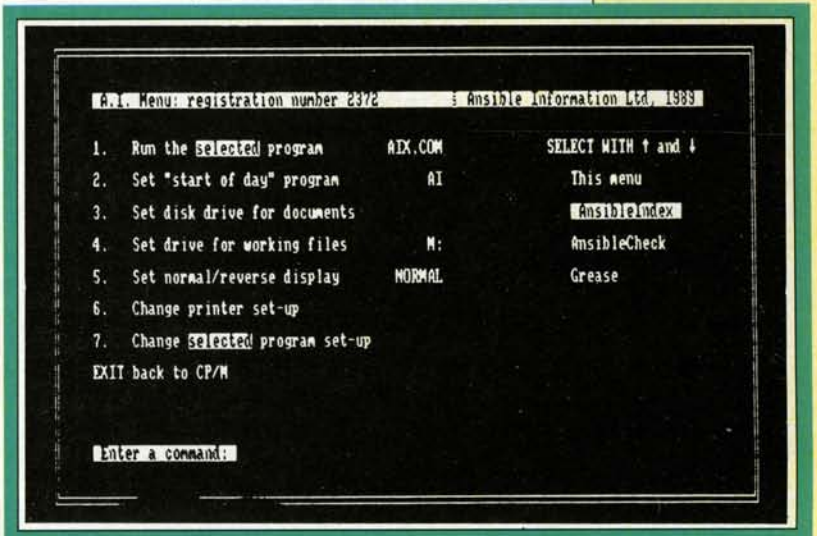
My first group of entries were synopses from a *Dictionary of National Biography*. Although most of them were short and seemed suitable for the one screen at a time format, I found that I still had to cut occasionally. This was because spreading a single entry over two screens seems to render the Sort facility next to useless.

You select words using the [+] key by the space-bar. In order to Sort you have to establish a format by separating the categories with a colon. I chose the following: Date of Birth, Date of Death and FL (when the other dates were unknown).

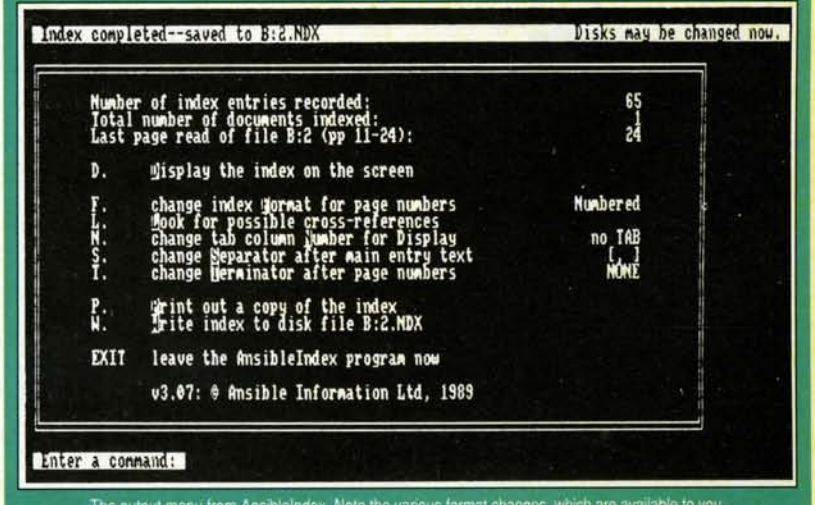
Chibase's Sort facility decided that if the date of birth could not be found, the next available date would be used instead! In the Search function only the screens which contained the selected strings (words or phrases) were brought up. So to browse through each record meant that it was necessary to insert a character such as the

Office politics

As an alternative to Chibase, if the notes are very short the free-form capabilities of the Mini-Office database could be considered. The only problem here is that it becomes very slow when it reaches 100k. The largest field or record size at present seems to be 576 characters but I'm sure that Database Software could enlarge this.



The main menu from AnsibleIndex. No irritating CP/M commands to contend with; note options 2 and 6 for ease of use.



The output menu from AnsibleIndex. Note the various format changes which are available to you.

letter A or X into every record.

At this point I waved goodbye to my £30.00 and ordered Script2Base. I am sure that there are people who could find a use for Chibase. It has a Sort facility and if sorting is essential then maybe it should be considered.

Script2Base

The worst thing about Script2Base is its manual. It only comes on disc and this means that you have to print it out. It's a pity that Dr Alan Paterson (of Encyclasoft Software the producers of Script2Base) adopted this cost-cutting method. The printed file is 18 A4 pages long. To me, this compares badly with the bound AnsibleIndex manual of 24 pages. Frankly, Script2Base's manual should be re-written in a more logical order.

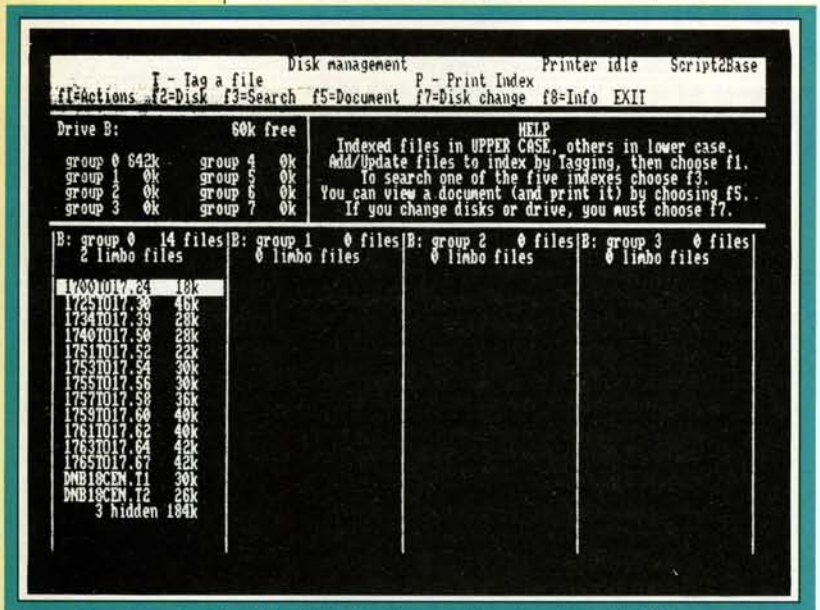
Happily, the installation process is nothing like as complicated as I found Chibase's to be. To allow for auto-booting of the program, a few files have to be copied over from the CP/M disc.

However, these are my only gripes. The text which you actually want to mark can be handled in LocoScript. You achieve this by using one of LocoScript's many style options; for example words relating to Arthur Griffith could be highlighted using [+] and [-] Bold while words relating to County Clare could be be in italics.

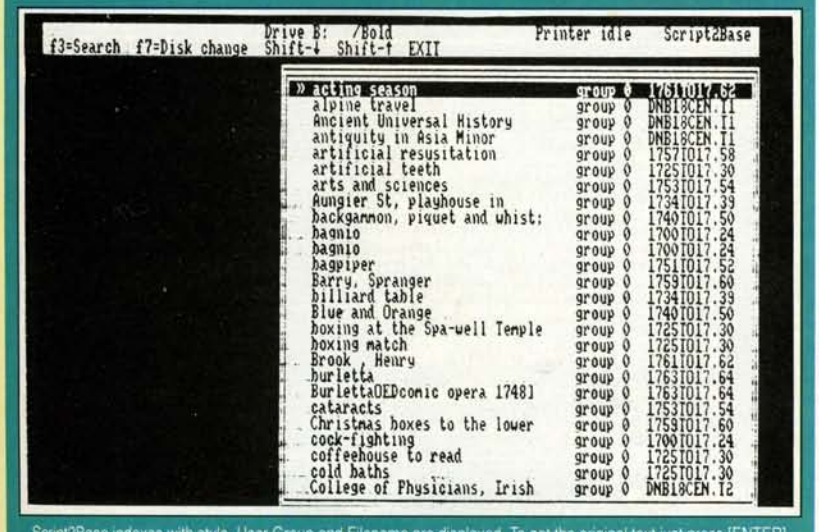
You are allowed a single index or five separate indices. I chose the latter. Actually, the program allows you to jump to any point, exact or approximate, in any of the indices. From there you can scroll backwards or forwards.

Pie dressed as mutton

So what are all these inverted phrases? Well, it's simple really. Say you use your free-form database to store all your favourite recipes.
You can index the main word, 'Pie', and have a number of sub-headings for the different kinds - 'cherry', 'apple', 'mutton' - and so on.



The main menu from Script2Base. Notice the striking resemblance to another useful PCW program ....



Script2Base indexes with style. User Group and Filename are displayed. To get the original text just press [ENTER]

Mark your card

The system of marking is much the same as in AnsibleIndex. It deals with words, phrases and inverted phrases. In fact David Langford, who designed AnsibleIndex could do well to look at Script2Base's solutions to multiple indices to replace Ansible's complicated system of 'themes'.

When you have finished marking in LocoScript you can run Script2Base. A disc management system which resembles LocoScript and its F keys is used in the indexing program. Script2Base allows for manual erasure of Limbo files – unlike LocoScript which clears them out automatically to make space – this becomes important as the disc fills up. Until you decide to get rid of them they serve as useful reminders that you have edited a file.

Script2Base is not fast, especially when updating. To achieve an update it does two things. First it removes all references to the file from the index. Then it re-writes them from the start. Updating a file is thus best done at the end of the working day. The indexed words and phrases and the key(s) take up quite a lot of room. For example, my current set use about 150k. The screen manager is there for the most part to warn you if you have changed a file because such a file naturally has a Limbo file attached. But this may not work when your disc is nearly full.

The index consists of words, phrases and inverted phrases. These are marked in alphabetical order and split (if you have marked them for splitting) into five separate indices. If the phrase marked in LocoScript is too long then the program chops it off at the tail although enough survives to allow you to identify it with ease. To carry out a search, you enter a word, or indeed the initial letter of that word. When your choice appears, you press [ENTER] and the original LocoScript document file appears. Cunning that one!

You can't edit a document at this stage, you have to get it into LocoScript. Using Script2Base, LocoScript and Flipper in unison could save time. You can, however, print out relevant passages. Another useful feature is the ability to 'mark' sections for 'Exporting' to new files. These can then be fed into LocoScript documents using its Insert Text facility. Handily, the indices themselves can be printed out too.

Conclusion

Though similar in many ways, both AnsibleIndex and Script2Base serve very different purposes. The former is intended for finished documents and for producing a printed index with page numbers. Although printing out can be done directly, it is better to insert the Index file into a LocoScript document. You can then do some judicious editing and print out from there.

Script2Base is intended primarily for finding references in your notes. When they are printed out, the program gives a group and filename wherein the reference can be found. Both Script2Base and AnsibleIndex can be used for putting lists of words, phrases and inverted phrases in alphabetical order, although I must say that I prefer AnsibleIndex for this purpose.

Speaking as an historian with long files of loose notes extending over several discs, I found that Script2Base just managed to pip AnsibleIndex at the post. It's easily the most useful free-form database I've ever used. ■

Chibase version 3 costs £29.95 from Chiasma. Phone 06333 60996

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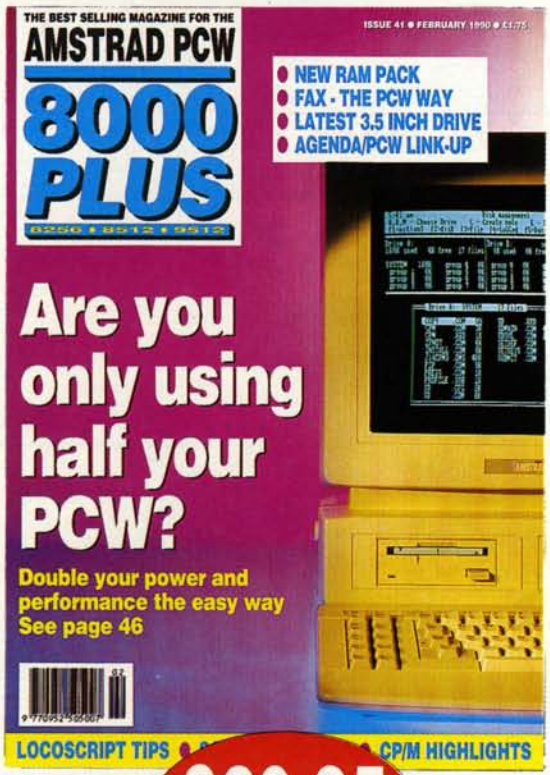

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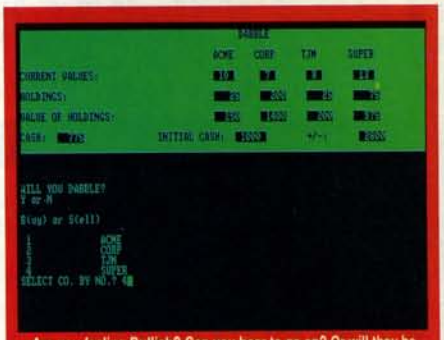
If there ever comes a point when the value of your holdings is zero and the cash in hand also zero, the game ends and you are probably declared bankrupt, laughed out of the market and forced to sell mobile-phone, car and timeshare in the Costa del Yup. On the other hand, we came out of one game with £13000.



Are you feeling Bullish? Can you bear to go on? Or will they be hunting the stag? Try your luck with DABBLE.BAS.

There are a number of additions to be made to the game; an end of trading message, more companies to be added and a save-game subroutine would be useful. What would be really interesting would be an Options or Futures version to be played out on alternate rounds.There is, in fact, a great deal of scope for expansion and we would be pleased to see any efforts you might be able to provide.

```
10 e$=CHR$(27):c$=e$+"E"+e$+"H":ron$=e$+"p":rof$=e$+"q"                    12F8
20 DEF FNwnd$(r,l,h,w)=e$+"X"+CHR$(32+r)+CHR$(32+l)+CHR$(31+h)+CHR$(31+w)  1A81
30 DEF FNat$(ro,co)=e$+"Y"+CHR$(ro+32)+CHR$(co+32)                         1475
40 RANDOMIZE (PEEK(64504!))                                                0B0F
50 FOR n=1 TO 4:READ n$:name$(n)=n$:NEXT                                   129F
60 FOR n=1 TO 7:READ n$:new$(n)=n$:NEXT                                    1325
70 DATA "ACME","CORP","TJM ","SUPER","DOWN 2","DOWN 1", "ALL QUIET"        1AC8
80 DATA "UP 1", "UP 2","BULL - ALL UP 4","BEAR - ALL DOWN 4"               13F3
90 inc=1000:csh=inc:sp$=SPACE$(90):p$="#####"                              11EF
100 PRINT c$:PRINT FNwnd$(0,0,13,90);ron$                                  11A7
110 PRINT SPACE$(42);"DABBLE";SPACE$(42):PRINT sp$                         1687
120 PRINT SPACE$(37)+"ACME    CORP     TJM      SUPER"+SPACE$(22)           18C1
130 PRINT sp$                                                              05D9
140 PRINT "CURRENT VALUES:"+SPACE$(75):PRINT sp$                           18EF
150 PRINT "HOLDINGS:";SPACE$(81)                                           0DF8
160 PRINT sp$:PRINT "VALUE OF HOLDINGS:";SPACE$(72):PRINT sp$              1FC9
170 PRINT "CASH: ";SPACE$(20);"INITIAL CASH: ";                            1540
180 PRINT SPACE$(15);"+/-: ";SPACE$(30)                                    0EE9
190 PRINT FNat$(11,7);csh:PRINT FNat$(11,41);inc: PRINT SPACE$(89)         1DFA
200 FOR x=1 TO 4:v(x)=1+INT(RND*5):NEXT:GOSUB 470                          1732
210 PRINT FNwnd$(14,0,16,90);rof$:PRINT SPACE$(90)                         161D
```

Data lines are included early on in the game. You might like to change the company names. Also the windows are defined in lines 20 and 30. These might be useful to keep as subroutines.

```
220 FOR r=1 TO 20                                                              0706
230 PRINT c$:PRINT "ROUND  ";r;" OF 20":GOSUB 560                              14EA
240 PRINT c$:PRINT "WILL YOU DABBLE?":GOSUB 440                                16DB
250 IF rep$="Y" THEN GOSUB 590                                                 0C7E
260 FOR cnt=1 TO 6:PRINT c$:PRINT SPACE$(40);"MARKET NEWS"                     1C9C
270 a=1+INT(RND*4):b=1+INT(RND*7):ON b GOSUB 350,350,370,350,350,380,380       1C61
280 GOSUB 470:GOSUB 510:GOSUB 560:NEXT                                         12D1
290 f=0:IF csh+ vh(1)+ vh(2)+ vh(3)+ vh(4) =0 THEN 300 ELSE 310                1728
300 PRINT c$:PRINT "SORRY OLD BEAN - YOU'RE BROKE. GAME OVER":GOTO 330         232E
310 NEXT                                                                       0419
320 PRINT c$: PRINT "GAME OVER":GOSUB 470:GOSUB 490:GOSUB 510                  1D09
330 PRINT "ANOTHER GAME":GOSUB 440: IF rep$="N" THEN 340 ELSE RUN              1F7C
340 PRINT FNwnd$(0,0,30,90);rof$;c$:END                                        108E
350 q=b-3:v(a)=v(a)+q:IF v(a)<0 THEN v(a)=0 ELSE IF v(a)>20 THEN v(a)=20        1D8A
360 PRINT name$(a);" ";new$(b):RETURN                                          109A
370 PRINT new$(b):RETURN                                                       0C39
```

Watch out for line 300! The game turns are run through here with the turn counter appearing in a FOR...NEXT loop on line 220.

```
380 IF f=1 THEN PRINT new$(3):RETURN: ELSE PRINT new$(b)                       1C48
390 IF b=6 THEN q=4 ELSE q=-4                                                  0D04
400 f=1:FOR y=1 TO 4:v(y)=v(y)+q:NEXT:GOSUB 410:RETURN                         1A70
410 FOR y=1 TO 4                                                               06AA
420 IF v(y)<0 THEN v(y)=0 ELSE IF v(y)>20 THEN v(y)=20                         16EA
430 NEXT:RETURN                                                                094D
440 PRINT "Y or N":PRINT:GOSUB 450:RETURN                                      16F2
450 rep$=INKEY$:IF rep$="" THEN 450                                            110F
460 rep$=UPPER$(rep$):IF rep$<>"Y" AND rep$<>"N" THEN 440 ELSE RETURN          217B
470 GOSUB 570:FOR t=1 TO 4:PRINT FNat$(4,p+9);v(t):p=p+9:NEXT                  1EB7
480 GOSUB 580:RETURN                                                           0A2E
490 GOSUB 570:FOR t=1 TO 4:PRINT FNat$(6,p+9) USING p$;h(t):p=p+9:NEXT         22DA
500 GOSUB 580:RETURN                                                           0A18
510 FOR t=1 TO 4:vh(t)=v(t)*h(t):NEXT:GOSUB 570                                1663
```

Would you like to sit it out and watch the price fluctuations or get involved and make some money? Would you like to play again?

```
520 FOR t=1 TO 4:PRINT FNat$(8,p+9) USING p$;vh(t):p=p+9:NEXT                  1DBB
530 pl=0: FOR t=1 TO 4:pl=pl+vh(t):NEXT:g=(csh+pl)-inc                         1BAC
540 PRINT FNat$(10,7) USING p$;csh:PRINT FNat$(10,41);inc                      1923
550 PRINT FNat$(10,65) USING p$;g:GOSUB 580:RETURN                             1773
560 FOR x=1 TO 3000:NEXT:RETURN                                                1103
570 PRINT FNwnd$(0,0,13,90):p=28:RETURN                                        1277
580 PRINT FNwnd$(14,0,16,90):RETURN                                            1052
590 PRINT "B(uy) or S(ell)":PRINT: GOSUB 600:RETURN                            1A5E
600 d$=INKEY$:IF d$="" THEN 600                                                0A3D
610 d$=UPPER$(d$):IF d$<>"B" AND d$<>"S" THEN 600                              111A
620 IF d$="B" THEN 660 ELSE GOSUB 730                                          0F38
630 IF ns>h(cn) THEN PRINT "TOO MANY":GOSUB 560:PRINT c$:GOTO 720              1E74
```

Buying or selling, your finances could depend on the right decision. Lines 560 to 620 prompt you for the go ahead.

```
640 h(cn)=h(cn)-ns:csh=csh+(ns*v(cn))                                          10F4
650 GOSUB 490:GOSUB 510:PRINT c$:GOTO 720                                      131F
660 GOSUB 730                                                                  054A
670 IF ns*v(cn)>csh THEN PRINT "TOO DEAR":GOSUB 560:PRINT c$:GOTO 720          219C
680 IF v(cn)<>0 THEN 700                                                       0979
690 PRINT "WORTHLESS - CAN'T BUY":GOSUB 560:PRINT c$:GOTO 720                  1F9C
700 h(cn)=h(cn)+ns:csh=csh-(v(cn)*ns)                                          1068
710 GOSUB 490:GOSUB 510:PRINT c$                                               0EBF
720 PRINT "DABBLE AGAIN?":GOSUB 440:IF rep$="N" THEN RETURN ELSE 590           2113
730 FOR x=1 TO 4:PRINT x,name$(x):NEXT                                         12DC
740 INPUT "SELECT CO. BY NO.";cn                                               0FB8
750 IF cn<1 OR cn>4 THEN 730 ELSE INPUT "NO. OF SHARES";ns: RETURN             20B3
```

The roving routines which are the heart of the machine reside here. Lines 720 to 750 hold the key to profit or loss.

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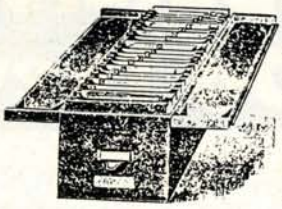

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Utility belter!

Listings Plus has been deluged by drawing programs, calendars, games and menus. Most of these are excellent but they tend to be variations on a theme – you can only have so many calendars after all. What we need the most is a good programming utility. Although it is quite possible to sit down with Protext or LocoScript and write a program, there are niggles. You have to leave both to get back to BASIC and even RPED.BAS (the BASIC editor provided with the PCW) won't keep an eye on the things which most progammers need to be monitored. So, we have a proposition for you all. We need a listing which will fulfil the following criteria. The one that does will win the prize (to be announced at the bottom of this box).

It must track variables – both string and numeric.

It should also be able to provide information on the following:

the number of times each variable was mentioned
the line numbers in which they appeared
REM statements
REM line numbers
PRINT statements
PRINT line numbers

Aside from this, any features which you think might be useful to other programmers in Mallard BASIC can be included. There should be good on-screen prompts and the ability to address all three drives.

The length of the listing should ideally be less then 100 lines. Because we have to run a checksum program no line should contain more than 80 characters.

The prize will be any book you care to choose under the price of £20 and the listings fee of 50p per line (dependent on quality). We know you can do it. So send your entries, on disc, with documentation to: Listings Plus Competition, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2AP.

BEAN.BAS

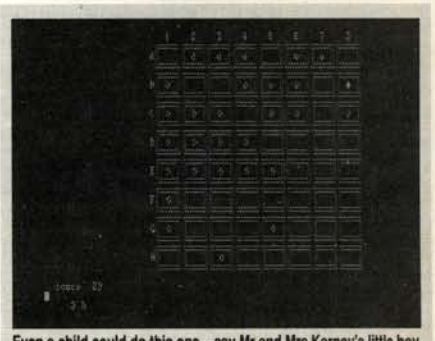
by K Boothroyd

Mr Boothroyd has decided to call this game Jumping Bean. However, many of the chess players amongst you will probably recognise this game as the Knight's Circuit or Knight's Tour. For many, many years this has been one of the most difficult, but satisfying, excersises the great game can offer.

With BEAN you have to move a marker around an 8 by 8 board touching every square but touching only once. You move in the same way as a chess knight (or horsey as it is known in the 8000 Office). This means moving in an L-shape. Two squares up, down or sideways and once across. This brain-blaster has been able to keep some of the greatest players of all time happy for hours on end. There are thousands of ways of achieving the Tour and even more ways of getting it wrong.

The programming itself is fairly compact for what it achieves – not only does it have to monitor the movements it also has to keep a weather eye out for the squares which have been touched. Probably the most interesting part about the BEAN is the fact that even though there is a board shown on the screen, there is not a DEF FN (define user function) to be seen. Instead Mr Boothroyd makes use of the variable b$ to do the work for him.

Again, some additions could be made. A 'save game' feature could be very useful, as well as a method of quitting mid-stream. As it stands, once you have started there is no quitting – you have to plough on to the end or use the good old [ALT]+[C] combination to escape. As a jumping off point for more detailed programming – some might say impossible Artificial Intelligence – you might like to try programming the PCW to complete the tour all by itself. This would be a real programming feat to say the least.



Even a child could do this one – say Mr and Mrs Karpov's little boy. Guide the marker around the board with the frustrating BEAN.BAS

```
10 DIM bor%(8,8)                                                    05DE
20 FOR t=1 TO 8:FOR y=1 TO 8:bor%(t,y)=0:NEXT y:NEXT t              1918
30 bor%(4,4)=1:row%=4:col%=4:sc%=1                                  0D2C
40 b$=CHR$(32):e$=CHR$(138)                                         097B
50 PRINT CHR$(27);"E";CHR$(27);"H";                                 0CAB
60 PRINT                                                            0482
70 PRINT CHR$(27);"H";b$;                                           095A
80 FOR w=1 TO 20:PRINT b$;:NEXT w                                   1088
90 FOR t=49 TO 56:PRINT b$;b$;CHR$(t);b$;b$;:NEXT t:PRINT           1BD7
```

This little lot sets up the board on which your mind will be tested. Note the clever use of the b$ and e$ variables to save space in the code.

```
100 FOR t=1 TO 8                                                    06B4
110 FOR qq=1 TO 20:PRINT b$;:NEXT qq                                11D6
120 PRINT b$;:FOR w=1 TO 8                                          0BA6
130 PRINT CHR$(134);e$;e$;e$;CHR$(140);:NEXT w:PRINT                16B2
140 FOR qq=1 TO 20:PRINT b$;:NEXT qq                                11DF
150 PRINT CHR$(64+t);:FOR y=1 TO 8                                  0E39
160 IF bor%(t,y)=0 THEN PRINT CHR$(133);b$;b$;b$;CHR$(133);         1851
170 IF bor%(t,y)=1 THEN PRINT CHR$(133);b$;CHR$(188);b$;CHR$(133);  1BE7
180 IF bor%(t,y)=3 THEN PRINT CHR$(133);b$;CHR$(187);b$;CHR$(133);  1BEB
190 NEXT y:PRINT                                                    0913
```

The board is set up here. Those two variables come in very handy in lines 160-180, saving space and speeding things up.

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```
200 FOR qq=1 TO 20:PRINT b$;:NEXT qq                                    11D5
210 PRINT b$;:FOR w=1 TO 8                                              0BA5
220 PRINT CHR$(131);e$;e$;e$;CHR$(137);:NEXT w:PRINT                    16A8
230 NEXT t:PRINT:PRINT "  score ";sc%                                   1243
240 IF sc%=64 THEN 500                                                  0896
250 REM ******************************                                  0834
260 REM **** get input from keys  ****                                   10C8
```

The messages which will bring either money or misery are created here. Also note the use of the User functions in lines 190, 210. These were defined in lines 20 and 30

```
270 a$=INKEY$:IF a$="" THEN 270                                         0A48
280 IF ASC(a$)<49 OR ASC(a$)>56 THEN 270                                0EF5
290 PRINT CHR$(27);"Y";CHR$(60);CHR$(36);                               0FB1
300 PRINT CHR$(7);                                                      0734
310 nrow%=ASC(a$)-48:PRINT nrow%;                                       0F90
320 a$=INKEY$:IF a$="" THEN 320                                         0A22
330 IF ASC(a$)<97 OR ASC(a$)>104 THEN 320                               0F16
340 PRINT CHR$(7);                                                      0740
350 ncol%=ASC(a$)-96:PRINT a$                                           0C9C
```

Your move is monitored here, line 270 examines the keyboard. Would this be the ideal place for a Quit routine perhaps?

```
360 IF bor%(ncol%,nrow%)=0 THEN 420                                     1022
370 PRINT CHR$(27);"Y";CHR$(60);CHR$(36);                               0FAD
380 PRINT "....ILLEGAL MOVE...";:FOR delay=1 TO 2000:NEXT delay         1CB7
390 PRINT CHR$(27);"Y";CHR$(60);CHR$(36);                               0FB3
400 FOR loop=1 TO 20:PRINT b$;:NEXT loop                                14D5
410 GOTO 70:REM *** dont forget this line ***                           1619
420 FOR w=1 TO 8:READ c,d                                               0ADB
430 IF (nrow%=row%+c)*(ncol%=col%+d) THEN 470                           116B
440 NEXT w:RESTORE                                                      0A01
450 GOTO 370                                                            04CA
460 REM                                                                 03BD
```

An interesting use of DATA reading occurs here in the loop which begins on line 420. This helps to make sure you're not cheating –see line 380

```
470 RESTORE:bor%(col%,row%)=3:row%=nrow%:col%=ncol%                     19A1
480 bor%(col%,row%)=1:sc%=sc%+1:GOTO 70                                 1136
490 DATA 2,1,1,2,-2,1,-1,2,2,-1,1,-2,-1,-2,-2,-1                        0C69
500 PRINT CHR$(27);"Y";CHR$(60);CHR$(36);                               0F9C
510 PRINT "...WELL DONE...."                                            0BF0
520 FOR delay=1 TO 6000:NEXT delay:END                                  11F1
```

If you ever complete the game then you might see the message on line 510. The rest of this section deals with your moves.

How to type in a listing

The first thing to is get BASIC running. To achieve this you will need to load CP/M. Once you have done this insert the disc with BASIC.COM and type BASIC at the A> prompt.

You will know when you have BASIC running when the A> prompt disappears to be replaced with Ok, the BASIC prompt.

Now all you have to do is type the listing in line by line ignoring the four figure (hexadecimal) numbers at the end of each line. These are check digits which relate to the Checksum program printed in issue 26.

Don't press [RETURN] as soon as you have finished a line. Go back over the line and check for typing errors which can occur when you least expect them. Once you are happy that the line is correct, you can move on to the next one. When you have finished typing the program, you must save it. To do this type Save"DABBLE. (or whatever name you prefer). There is no need to bother with the .bas as the PCW assumes this. If you wish to save the program in ASCII form, so that you can examine it in LocoScript or your favourite word processor, you should type Save"DABBLE.BAS",a.

Having done this you should then type LIST which will print the program on the screen. If you want a copy from the printer you must type LLIST. Give the listing another look over to make sure everything is all right. If it looks okay the time has come to type RUN.

If the program runs properly first time, you can count yourself very lucky indeed. The chances are that an error message such as Syntax Error in Line 123 (or some such line) will occur.

To deal with this problem merely type EDIT 123 and the line will come up on the screen. Check it against the magazine version and make any corrections using the [DEL] and cursor keys. Once the alterations have been made you must save the program again.

The chances are that a few errors will occur, don't worry about that as error solving is the best way to learn programming. Finally if you are in doubt you should consult the manual.

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Here are some comments from the people who matter and who really know the system - the users:

I am so impressed with the software that I thought you might like to know that I think it is superb and surpasses many other packages I have bought at more than twice the price of Money Manager. Thanks for a fantastic, easy to use piece of software that represents outstanding value for money. **D.A.J. (Lincs)**

I cannot let this opportunity pass without repeating my satisfaction with Money Manager. I am using it for the book-keeping of several small businesses. Before I retired recently after 40 years in banking, 24 of which were as a branch manager, I would have been delighted if my small (and some not so small) business customers had presented me with figures and statistics of their businesses as produced by Money Manager. It really is a program which, being so easy to use, could save many businesses from the chaos and disaster which can, and so often does, result from poor or non-existent book-keeping. **R.A.L. (Cheshire)**

Thank you for providing such a marvellous and easy to use program at such a reasonable price. No longer do we guess how much is where and no decisions are made without first consulting Money Manager. **K.D. (Milton Keynes)**

I think this is the best program that I use on my computers and I have tried quite a few programs! **A.B. (Iceland)**

I have bought the new Money Manager - and I think it is magnificent. The manual is so rare in the mass market: a well printed, clear, concise, friendly instruction booklet written for us amateurs who really aren't computer experts, and don't particularly want to be. I really do congratulate whoever listened to the market, and whoever wrote the instruction book. Well done indeed! **C.P.G. (Hove)**

I have been very pleased with the program, in fact it is an indispensable part of my business. My accountant is pleased and I'm sure it saves some of his fees due to the reports etc that I can give him. It's incredible that it can be so good at this price. **L.P. (Walsall)**

The program is perfect, just what I needed. If it were edible I would have a second portion. **N.T. (Wilts)**

I should like to say how pleased and impressed I am with Money Manager. It seems to me far simpler, faster and more flexible than any of the other accounts packages I have looked at. I have so far used it to prepare two sets of accounts for a small business, and am delighted with the results. **R.D.H. (Yeovil)**

I must say that next to my word-processor this has to be my most frequently used program and certainly has made an astounding change to our finances. All in all .... brilliant! **Dr I.N.P. (Co Durham)**

I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating you on an excellent program. I am treasurer of a local cycling club and the help that the program gives me in that job is tremendous, and impresses the auditors too! It is also very useful to be able to keep track of my personal accounts, and know to the penny how much I owe to the various credit card companies. Keep up the good work! **J.F.N. (Wilts)**

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SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

LANGFORD

A page in the company of author and PCW pundit David Langford

An old friend called to bewail his feelings of computerised obsolescence. His dearly beloved PCW has become worn and tatty, and people (he says) laugh at him for clinging to a machine bought three whole years ago.

"Is it time for a change?" he asked with a technophilic gleam in his eye. "State of the art. High tech. Cutting edge. Fast lane. Maybe in matt black to match the music centre ... "

Well, possibly not black – the business computer industry seems committed to pale grey or beige cases, ingeniously toned to highlight the dingy evidence of actual use. (Why is the filthiest key on my PCW the J?) But a faster system does seem to be a lure.

I cheered him by making up and quoting the hardware version of Parkinson's Law, which is that your expectations of the most fabulous new machine will expand until, sooner than you think, you start grumbling at its absurd limitations.

One instance of the law is known to writers of this column as Terry Pratchett's Insight: "There's no such thing as a fast computer after the first three days." By this time, the super new machine has become normal (i.e. faintly if not quite annoyingly sluggish), while your old one is now so ridiculously slow as to be unusable.

Indeed, strangely enough, I find my IBM word-processing system doesn't seem that much astonishingly faster than LocoScript. The IBM may indeed run at ten times the PCW's speed, but against that is the fact that the software I use can handle a full-length book as a single file. In accordance with the Law, the eager writer does exactly this, ungratefully takes the facility for granted, and spends his or her time moaning that as a consequence, moving from end to end of a document occupies the same sort of interglacial aeon familiar in PCW legend....

Optional Extras

"You mean it doesn't come with software?" said my pal in bogglement, and fainted when I explained that the market leader amongst IBM word processors cost £425 plus VAT, admittedly negotiable to much less by avoiding posh computer dealers with nice suits and carpets.

Indeed, the pricing policies of multi-national software companies are a real running sore in the computer industry. I still gnash my teeth at being an authorized dealer for a package we'll call ExpensiveWord, and finding that the suppliers (a) flogged software in bulk to mail order box-shifters who could make a profit selling them at less than the discount price quoted to authorized dealers; (b) in answer to enquiries, advised prospective customers that 'the going rate' was less than I as a dealer could buy it for, let alone sell it for.

But I digress, as usual. Although it's barely possible to get by with public domain stuff, anyone seriously planning to invest in an IBM system should be careful to budget a few hundred for word-processing software alone.

Other extras include a printer, rarely part of the deal, and a printer cable, and perhaps a complicated mass of communications software, interfaces and cables to allow transfer of documents from the old PCW.

I fell into the 'extras' trap this year when tempted by a special offer of a DIP Pocket PC, better known under its 'Atari Portfolio' alias. It came with batteries and built-in ROM software, and is the first portable computer which has both a real operating system and does go in the pocket instead of being luggage.

Immediately, it didn't work. Extra item number one was a fresh set of batteries. Then I ran into software bugs (never try to save an empty document, for example) and had to reset the machine. This meant losing everything in memory. Extra number two was therefore the equivalent of a disc: a battery-backed memory card with a price that made my eyes water.

Extras three and four were needed to transfer stuff to my desktop computer: an interface box and a peculiar cable which a Tottenham Court Road shop first couldn't believe in and then had to make up specially.

Reading the small print that came with the interface, I was instructed to buy extra number five in the form of a mains adaptor, since transferring files is such a frightful drain on the batteries ...

It's a sweet little machine, though, and when I've dredged up a technical manual and/or another cable (extras six and seven), I'll report on how well it works as a roving accessory to the PCW.

One safe bet is that although the Pocket PC behaves like a tiny IBM, the still-delayed IBM LocoScript will not work usefully with its strictly limited 40x8 LCD screen.

Yuppie Bait

Another friend has just bought an Amstrad PPC: imagine her delight at finding it came with a free cellphone! Now she too could chat with her stockbroker while whizzing along the M4 fast lane and working the fax machine with her other hand.

Once again, there were some extras: 'Connecting' the free cellphone costs £60. Line rental is £25 per month, plus call charges. Insurance against loss is compulsory, at £3.50 a month. You pay a further £3 a month 'invoicing charge'! And none of the above includes VAT. All payments must be via direct-debit – which allows the cellphone mob to take what they like, when they like, from your bank account. 'Credit worthiness' is a condition of contract, and as a display of trust in this quality a deposit of £200 is required.

As my software partner said to me, "We're in the wrong business, mate." It certainly sharpened our irritation at motorway punters yakking obliviously away on their wretched phones: now we know they're all vastly richer than us.... ■

TIP QT Tips QQ Questions OFFS

Enlightenment is here!

In the dark in LocoScript? Gloomy about BASIC? Things looking black in Mini Office and the other CP/M programs? As the equinox approaches and evenings draw out, let Tipoffs shed some light on your PCW as well, with more than enough time-saving tips to make up the hour you lose on March 25th.

This month the Reverend M Komor of Wales wins £35 for LocoFile, LocoScript and Micro Design tips. If you know any illuminating tips on LocoScript, LocoFile, BASIC or any other popular program, tell us – we pay hard cash for the best ones! Send your bright ideas to Tipoffs, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2AP.

Two file Loco editing!

WINNER

QT The ability to work on two files at once is great. You can keep notes or background information in one file and write them up in the other – ideal for writers, journalists, academics and letter-writers.

LocoScript, unlike Protext, doesn't allow simultaneous two-file editing, but by using LocoFile you can have something close to it.

If you want to work with biggish documents, say around 10K, first of all define a new paper type from the disc manager's [f6] Settings menu that is at least 80 wide and 99 lines deep. This is the maximum size paper you can use with LocoFile.

Then create or edit the documents you want to use in the normal way, and save one of them in its entirety as a block, say Block 1.

Next create a new datafile and type [f5] 'Select Paper Type'. Use cursors to select the new big page size just created.

Back in the [f5] card menu, set your card size to 80 wide by 99 deep. Then type [f3] to create new item and define its size to the same dimensions. Finally press [EXIT] and you will be able to type in your first record.

Now, by pasting in block 1, the record will be filled with the document you've chosen. Be warned though: this calls for some vigorous number-crunching, and it can take 30 seconds for a 1000 word document to appear on screen!

You'll now be able to flip between any document you are editing and this one at any time just by calling LocoFile from with the document. Very useful for reference to notes and so on!

Reverend M Komor, Llantwit Major, S Glamorgan

Drive me away

QQ How can I get rid of the 'Drive is A:' message that appears at the foot of the screen in CP/M?

M Keeble, Rayleigh, Essex

8000 PLUS: *At the A> prompt all you do is to type [EXIT]0 (zero, not the letter O). This makes the PCW use that bottom line instead of reserving it for the printer status line and 'Drive is A:' messages. [EXIT]1 restores normality.*

Iconoclast

QT 1. MicroDesign, like most DTP programs, allows you to design your own icons, in this case on a coarse 24x24 grid.

Why not make use of the extra definition afforded by MD over other programs by designing icons on the Font Designer's 32x64 grid?

To do this, first access the Font designer from the Layout screen by typing [EXIT]F.

Once in the designer make the usable area of the grid as large as possible by moving the margin and base lines, then draw your icon to pixel accuracy. At the base of the screen select one of the characters that isn't used very often, say the # character, then press K(eep) to redefine the # key as the icon.

Save the font file to disc with a new name, and from then on, whenever that font file is loaded, typing the # will give the new icon.

2. Whenever possible, save graphics files as AREAS from the Layout, rather than as CUTS from the Design screen. Areas are compressed into a lot less disc space.

3. Unless the design of your word demands an upright (portrait) layout, try and use the A4 sideways option, as the quality seems even better than usual.

4. Exiting to CP/M leaves you with the keys altered. The fastest way to get them back to normal is to have a disc with SETKEYS.COM (from your CP/M disc) and LOCOCHAR.KEY (from your LocoScript 2 disc). Typing SETKEYS LOCOCHAR.KEY at the A> with the disc in the drive will restore things.

Space: the final frontier

QT For LocoScript menus which require the set keys [+] and [-] to place and remove a tick next to an option, you can use the easier to find space bar instead to change the option.

Both tips from: Reverend M Komor, Llantwit Major, S Glamorgan

WINNER

Spelling update

QQ What must I do to copy the updated USERSPEL.DCT in the system group in drive M to the file called USERSPEL.DCT in Group 7 of my startup disc?

Anne Cherchian, London

8000 PLUS: *The short answer is 'by using [f3] in the normal way', but I think a bit more explanation might be appropriate!*

LocoSpell always uses the user dictionary it finds in the same group as the one you've created your document in. So if you create a document in group 7 of your start of day disc, the user dictionary there is updated (or created if there isn't one). If you create a document in the system group of M, the user dictionary in there will be updated.

The thing is that the user dictionary in group 0, the system group, of M was the one copied across from group 0 of the startup disc.

The answer to your problem seems to be therefore to use [f3] to copy the user dictionary in group 0 of M to group 7 of your startup disc. From then on in group 7 of M you'll have the dictionary there, copied for you automatically on startup. Create any documents to be spellchecked here and do your updating here. Before switching off, copy the amended USERSPEL.DCT back to group 7 of your startup using [f3] as normal.

Cracking problems

QQ What do I do to print out in the Cracker spreadsheet in small print?

WG Calvert, Petworth, W Sussex

8000 PLUS: *Select a text mode as normal. Pressing [ALT]O[RETURN] (that's a capital O, not a zero) shrinks the print, giving you up to 132 columns. [ALT]R[RETURN] returns to normal. Similarly [ALT]N enlarges print, [ALT]T returns to normal size, and [ALT]Q puts text into bold. You can't edit text in these modes, by the way.*

Subliminal to the ridiculous

I'm writing a program in BASIC, and I'd like to make a message appear on screen for the shortest time possible. I've tried using PRINT to display the message and then immediately afterwards overprinting it with blanks, but it takes too long. Is there a better way?
David Hemmings, Southampton

8000 PLUS *: Hmm. Are you trying to display subliminal messages, by any chance? Well, here's a suggestion. It uses the OUT 248,8 command which blanks the screen (by changing the colour of the letters to black – the text remains on screen, but invisible) and OUT 248,7 which restores the green or white text colour.*

The effect of the listing below is to display the message BUY 8000 PLUS EVERY MONTH in the middle of a blanked screen so fast that it should not register consciously hence boost the magazine's already ridiculously high sales. Lines 10 and 80 just clear the screen.

```
10 PRINT CHR$(27)+"E"+
   CHR$(27)+"H"
20 OUT 248,8
30 PRINT CHR$(27)+"Y"+
   CHR$(55)+CHR$(55)+"BUY
   8000 PLUS EVERY MONTH"
40 OUT 248,7
50 FOR t=1 TO 10:NEXT
60 OUT 248,8
70 PRINT CHR$(27)+"E"+
   CHR$(27)+"H"
80 OUT 248,7
```

You can make the message appear for a bit longer by increasing the 10 in line 50. In fact with values under about 12 the message sometimes doesn't appear at all, depending on the synchronisation of the screen drawing and the instant you print the message.

Incidentally, it is reported that a cinema in the US in the 1960s tried to increase the sales of its ice-cream by flashing the words ICE CREAM subliminally in the middle of the film.

It had limited success. All that happened was that several people requested that the heating be turned up.

Pitching it right

Is there any way of producing a printout using Pitch 10 or 12 inside a SuperCalc document? At the moment I have to insert the text inside a LocoScript document – very time consuming!
Andrew Hawkins, Leominster, Herefordshire

8000 PLUS :*If you want to change the style of print, to get italics or whatever, give the /O command for 'Output' and as normal choose D or C for 'Display' or 'Contents'. But before choosing P for 'Printer' choose S for 'Setup' – you then enter S again for setup codes and the following can be used to change the style of the spreadsheet you print out.*

The case matters – to set bold, for example, type [ALT]G and not [ALT]g.

Condensed text	*[ALT]O (on)*
	[ALT]R (off)
Bold	*[EXIT]G (on)*
	[EXIT]H (off)
Enlarged text	*[ALT]N (on)*
	[ALT]T (off)
Italic	*[EXIT]4 (on)*
	[EXIT]5 (off)
Underline	*[EXIT]-1 (on)*
	[EXIT]-0 (off)
Pica text	*[EXIT]P*
Elite text	*[EXIT]M*
Superscript	*[EXIT]S0 (on)*
Subscript	*[EXIT]S1 (on)*
Both of these	*[EXIT]T (off)*

On some versions of SuperCalc this may not appear to work. This is because SuperCalc is sending a code to the printer automatically every time you print. If this code is for, say, condensed, then this will override the codes you've typed in manually.

The solution is to set this code to zero so that it doesn't override anything. Use the INSTALL program and select the 'modify printer' option. Select item 8 to change and give zero as the new printer code. Your new SC2 will accept any of the codes given previously.

Membership problems

I use LocoFile for maintaining the records of our Theatre Club members, both past and present. One item it holds in addition to name, address and so on is the member's status: Current or Lapsed. This has to be amended manually when it changes – very tedious!

What I need is a suitable LocoMail program to merge with the 'master' datafile which will stop at the Membership Status, and ask if the stored details (C* or L*) are to be altered or left alone.

Answering yes would let you type in the new letter, whereas no would automatically move to the next record. Naturally the amended datafile would be the new master.

Can anyone help out?
Peter Rawbone, Bucks

Holy C! PCW with three drives!

Something for 8512 owners. This BASIC listing creates a file called DRIVEC.COM on the disc. If, at the A> prompt of CP/M, you type DRIVEC with this disc in the drive, you can then use a drive C!

Of course, it isn't an extra drive; it's just the A drive in the top corner. If you type C: at the A>, you get a prompt to 'Put the disc for C: into the drive and press any key', allowing disc swapping and commands like PIP C:=A:*.*.

```
10 REM by ML Shaw
20 PRINT "Making COM file..."
30 OPEN "O",1,"DRIVEC.COM" :
   n=8 : GOSUB 70
40 PRINT "Okay, now type
   DRIVEC for a virtual drive C"
50 SYSTEM
60 '
70 FOR j=1 To n
80 READ a$
90 PRINT #1,CHR$(VAL("&H"+
   a$));
100 NEXT
110 CLOSE 1
120 RETURN
130 '
140 DATA 21,2E,BD,22,67,FE,
   C9,1A
```

Mark Shaw, Hucknall, Notts

8000 PLUS: *Of course, this isn't desperately useful (apart from running SUBMIT files that were written to use the 'B' drive on an 8256) but it's an interesting oddity!*

```
A>drivec

A>c:
C>pip a:=c:program.com

Please put the disc for A: into the drive then press any key
```

Add a C drive to your PCW8512 for free! Now, it must be useful for something...

Star performance

Here's the easy way to get special effects from a Star LC10 printer using Protext. Just put the following lines before text using the effect. You can also use the following codes to write a printer driver – e.g. to make [ALT]XQ produce quadruple size, assign 27 104 2 to 'q on' and 27 104 0 to 'q off' in 'Set printer control codes' from SETPRINT.

Command	Effect
>OC 27,80	Pica
>OC 27,107,0	Courier
>OC 27,107,1	Sans serif
>OC 27,107,2	Orator with small capitals
>OC 27,107,3	Orator with lower case
>OC 27,52	Italics
>OC 27,53	Italics off
>OC 27,77	Elite
>OC 15	Condensed
>OC 18	Condensed off
>OC 27,112,1	Proportional
>OC 27,112,0	Proportional off
>OC 27,119,1	Double height
>OC 27,119,0	Double height off
>OC 27,104,1	Double height and width
>OC 27,104,2	Quadruple ht and width
>OC 27,104,0	Normal size
>OC 27,87,1	Enlarged
>OC 27,87,0	Enlarged off
>OC 27,40,27,120,1	Near letter quality
>OC 27,120,0	Draft quality
>OC 27,83,1	Subscript
>OC 27,83,0	Superscript
>OC 27,84	Sub/superscript off
>OC 27,45,1	Underline on
>OC 27,45,0	Underline off

Simon Phillips, Leamington Spa

TIPOFFS

Continuous assessment

Q How can I make LocoScript 2 use continuous paper as the default? Every time I load it I have to change the paper type before a document can be printed. Is there a way round?
Alfred Burruss,
Bicester, Oxon

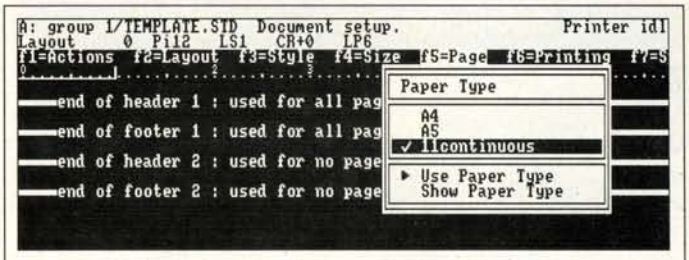
8000 PLUS: *First you have to make sure your document is set up for continuous paper. To do this, edit it, press [f1] and [ENTER] for 'Document setup', then select [f5] 'Paper type'.*

Select '11continuous' with [+] and [ENTER]. [EXIT] [ENTER] [EXIT] [ENTER] takes you back to the main document.

If you set up your TEMPLATE.STD like this, then every document you create in that group will expect to print out on continuous paper.

Now you have to set up the printer to expect continuous paper as default. In the disc manager, with your startup disc in drive A, select [f6] and take 'Printer defaults'. From this select 'Default Paper Type'. Select '11continuous' with [+] and [ENTER], then [EXIT] [ENTER]. Now select 'Write SETTINGS.STD' and the new settings will be written to the disc in A. [EXIT] [ENTER] back to the disc manager.

From next time your PCW starts up it will print all those documents automatically in continuous mode without question.



Setting up a document to print out automatically on continuous paper...

...and making sure the PCW expects everything to be in continuous paper mode from now on

Odd fellows unite

T Here's a rather easier way of printing out a LocoScript document's odd and even pages separately (so continuous paper can have both sides used to end up with a book-style output, for example) than the one mentioned in Tipoffs in January.

Suppose the document is called BOOK.DOC

1. Copy it twice, calling one copy BOOK.EVN and the other BOOK.ODD
2. Go to the start of BOOK.ODD. Press [PAGE] and [CUT] repeatedly in that order to the end of the document. Exit and 'finish edit'.
3. Go to the start of BOOK.EVN. Press [CUT] and [PAGE] in that order repeatedly to the end. Exit and 'finish edit'.
4. Print out BOOK.ODD on continuous paper, then reverse it and print BOOK.EVN on the other side.

Your original BOOK.DOC is still around of course.
SR Dalton,
Roundhay,
Leeds

If you want to get ahead, get Heels

T For addicts of Head over Heels, Ocean's superlative arcade adventure, you can get Heels to jump over the fence that separates them at the beginning of the game.

First, bring Heads into the same room as Heels and place him against the fence facing Heels. Switch to Heels and make him jump against the fence. While he is in mid air switch to Heads, make Heads jump up and immediately switch back to Heels and jump again.

Join them together, collect the gun and some doughnuts, then go back to the first room again.

Heads can get over the fence by jumping off Heels'.back. Then repeat the sequence to get Heels back over the fence. Then continue as if playing Heels.

There are many advantages in having them together, such as not having to pile up as many blocks to reach a doorway.
Michael Brunstrom,
Ealing, London

Recording records

Q Can you recommend a simple filing program to index my collection of 700 singles and 1200 LPs?
R Hollings, Eastville, Bristol

8000 PLUS: *LocoFile (from Locomotive on 0306 740606) is fine if you're a LocoScript user. Otherwise Mini Office from Database (0625 878888) provides a simple and fairly easy to use card index program.*

Amiga answer

Q Will Commodore Amiga DTP pictures load into a PCW if I get a 3.5 inch drive?
Robin Hosford, S Devon

8000 PLUS: *No.*

A passing fancy

T Is there a bug in Protext under the 'Two pass check' option in the spell checker? After the first pass I get the request to insert a second dictionary but it appears to 'hang' and ignores my pressing of [RETURN]. Makers Arnor have not been able to help me on this.
Keith Hodson,
Heywood, Lancs

8000 PLUS: *Well, on our version (2.23) the two-pass option works fine.*

But [RETURN] is not the key to press – it's [SPACE]!

In your defence, the manual doesn't explain things too well and it's not obvious from running the program either.

Pitch invasion

T For some applications (eg filling pre-printed forms) the usual line pitch – i.e. the number of lines per inch LocoScript prints – might not be quite right.

However you get a variety of effective line pitches by combining line spacing (set at the appropriate point in the document by [+]LS and the figure followed by [ENTER]) and line pitch ([+]LP followed by the figure and [ENTER]).

Here are some possibilities.

Spacing	Pitch	Lines per inch on printout
½	8	16
½	6	12
1	8	8
½	8+6*	7
1	6	6
1 ½	8	5 ⅓
2	8	4
2 ½	8	3.2
2	6	3
2 ½	6	2.4
3	6	2

* after each line of text, put [+]LP8 [RETURN] [+]LP6.
Ian Chisnall,
Bolton

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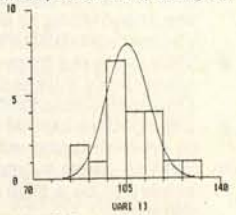

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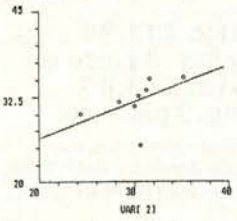

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Hard headed business

Q I use up to three PCWs for my business plus LocoScript 2, SuperCalc 2 and Micro Design.

I want to use a hard disc plus expanded memory with at least one machine (possibly two), hook up all three machines to the single hard disk and use all the software on the disc straight away. Is this possible?

KW Tucker,
Mursley,
Bucks

8000 PLUS: *Yes. The Cirtech Diamond Hard Disc can be used by up to seven machines at once, any of them starting up from the hard disc without needing a floppy! (Negotiations are still going on for this facility on LocoScript).*

You can 'boot' off a floppy if you wish. Data can of course be copied from the hard disc to the floppies in any machine, and can be copied from machine to machine either manually – by taking the disc across – or by copying it via the shared hard disc.

The only major program we've heard of that doesn't work on the Cirtech disc is Protext, so you should be OK. The SCA Rampack has a through connector so that you can 'piggy back' the interface for the hard disc on the back of it – i.e. use the PCW with the interface and on the hard disc at the same time.

Use of printers is unaffected by the set-up. Cirtech is on 0896 57790 and the disc costs from £465 for a 32Mb model.

Remember that you can't really use one copy of any program on more than one machine at the same time because of copyright – you need as many copies as machines! Your three-PCW setup really needs three copies of Micro Design, SuperCalc and LocoScript 2, unless of course you only use one copy of each at a time.

The new-found ability of the PCW to work with hard discs and networks is very welcome.

INKEY fingered

Q How can I check for the release of a key using INKEY$, instead of just checking for the pressing of one?

Mike Bradbury,
Bucknall, Stoke on Trent

8000 PLUS: *I don't think you can do it without altering the delay the PCW employs before repeating a key (i.e. the interval between the first Q appearing on screen when you press Q, and the next one if you keep the key pressed down). Perhaps some cunning programmer can help?*

Print maker

T Despite what your review said in 8000 Plus in January, the disc editor program Superzap can print out the display of sectors, using [SHIFT] [EXTRA] [PTR].

Mike Bradbury,
Bucknall,
Stoke on Trent

Stay composed

T When using the excellent music manuscript processor, The Composer's Pen, to print out short pieces of only two or three lines, such as hymn tunes, you have to experiment with several different line widths to obtain an even final result without last lines of only one or two bars. To avoid the lengthy process of printing out a trial version after each change of width, you can preview the end result: after [f1][RETURN] opt for 'Print some pages' [RETURN] and enter 999 [RETURN] [RETURN].

Incidentally, another idea is to add two entries to the index:
Delete a note, 47
Faint entries: deletion, 5

While writing I'd like to pay tribute to the staff of makers Composit Software, who have been prompt and courteous in answering some lengthy queries by telephone and letter. I cannot speak too highly of the service I have received from them.

David Hill,
Harlow, Essex

Do the splits

T If you have LocoFile you too can enjoy some of the benefits of a split-screen – that is, you can compare two versions of the same text at the same time, and can move one screen from page to page.

Make a LocoFile in A called, say, SPLITSCR with the card 12 lines deep and the maximum 80 characters wide. You could also use the top line for items which are headings, but the main item is an empty field 78 characters wide and 11 or 12 lines deep.

Every time you want to use a split screen, copy SPLITSCR into M: and then [COPY][PASTE] to load the text you want to edit into the newly created LocoFile page.

You are of course limited to 11 or 12 lines at a time, but you can use several pages. Position your main-screen text in the bottom half of the screen using CRs if necessary.

Remember that the first time you use your copy of SPLITSCR it will be superimposed on your disc management screen. The second time you will see the text editing screen below it.

As you cannot edit text on your main screen with LocoFile in use, the LocoFile page must be the 'active file'. Then you may extract lines using [COPY]. You can copy the amended version to a block using [f7] 'Extract'.

WK Piper,
Maidstone, Kent

New word swear words

T High Quality bold print doesn't appear to work on my copy of NewWord using the FX80 driver. It often aligns below the level of the rest of the line. NewStar say it is a hardware problem. High quality microjustified printing also isn't aligned properly.

Peter Philippson, Fallowfield, Manchester

8000 PLUS: *Never believe anyone who says their software won't work because of a 'hardware problem'. It's like blaming the fact that on TV none of the England batsman can play a sensible shot against the West Indies bowlers, on the television itself.*

You can make things easier for yourself by choosing the correct printer driver from the mass that are offered to you. The PCW printer is best served by NewWord's Epson LX80 driver (not the FX, which doesn't have a High Quality font) because then you find that the obtaining NLQ printout is a simple matter of entering the dot command .BP ON at the top of the letter template. Incidentally when using this command you must also enter the dot command .UJ OFF to eliminate the awful printer judder which will otherwise occur.

The NewWord manual claims that ^PY will do italics, but it doesn't seem to work. Here is a list of printer effects obtainable by the control codes. To use these, put the dot commands once only at the start of the text file, which then sets NewWord up. Then the text which you want to be in italics or enlarged should be enclosed by the 'on' and 'off' codes indicated. The effects work for one line only; to do a complete passage enlarged requires the 'on' code at the start of each line.

NewWord v2.17 for the PCW comes already installed for an Epson FX80 printer, which doesn't have a NLQ mode. To change, install NWINSTAL and at the prompt select the Epson LX80 as your default printer.

When entering the dot commands always ensure that the dot is at the extreme left margin. It doesn't matter how many dot commands you enter, they will have no effect on your header position. You will still be at Line 1 Column 1 after entering them all.

Action	*Dot Command*	*Code*
Enlarged print on	*.XQ 1B 0E*	*^PQ*
Enlarged print off	*.XW 14*	*^PW*
Italics on	*.XE 1B 34*	*^PE*
Italics off	*.XR 1B 35*	*^PR*
Proportional on	*.X[1B 70 31*	*^P[*
Proportional off	*.X] 1B 70 30*	*^P]*

So to do a phrase in italics, the file would read

.XE 1B 34
.XR 1B 35
Normal text then ^Eitalic text^R

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Are you absolutely sure your taxman is doing his job correctly? Plan your own tax with ease, this menu-driven program will calculate your income tax liability (4 tax years included) and provide pertinent facts about your tax position. You can perform 'what-if?' calculation to discover ways to minimise your tax liability. In fact, the program will advise you on things such as, if you are a married man, whether it would be advantageous to have your wife's income taxed separately or not. At this price who knows, you will probably find that PTP will pay for itself in tax savings the first time you use it!

** STOP PRESS **
July '89 – PTP user receives tax refund of over £2,000!!

£24.95

SUPERTYPE II

Perhaps the only reasonable criticism of the Amstrad PCW might be the standard of printed output. Upgrade your printer with this clever software utility. The program will provide you with 8 radically different and professional typestyles giving your documents an original facelift. The ingenious thing about Supertype is that once you've established your favourite font on a disc, you won't even notice it working. You run your software in the normal way and everything will be the same except when you print out. Supertype II works with LocoScript (up to version 2.16) and ANY OTHER suitable CP/M software.

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DGPAYROLL

Designed for the small business and handling payroll problems for up to 20 employees, this program is simple to use being completely menu-driven and worked examples. Comprehensive documentation and supported by Suitable for hourly/weekly/fortnightly/4-weekly/monthly paid employees, the program handles all calculations for pay, SSP and SMP, company and private pension schemes (fixed/percentage), payslip printing, printed records/reports and full payroll analysis. Complete user-control of PAYE, NI which actually calculates the complicated SSP requirements! and SSP rates. You won't find any other program at this price Printouts include P45, SSP Leavers, P14, P35, P60 as well as SSP1 (termination) and SSP1 (exclusion) details.

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A complete cashbook accounting system for the sole trader/partnership/limited company. Use the program to assist day-to-day book-keeping and VAT Returns, to complete End of Year Accounts if you wish. This program is simple to use, supported by an excellent manual with tutorial, meets legal requirements and will show the full financial state of your business. In addition to recording cash and bank transactions, the program will allow you to enter credit sales and purchases, and for all of these entries it will automatically complete double entry routines, to ensure your records are always in balance. Simple enough for the beginner, yet sufficiently powerful to grow with your business.

£69.95

DATASTORE II

Looking for fast access to stored information? Want to create customised reports, mailing lists for printing labels, office and personal records with NO technical knowledge? Researched, developed and written exclusively for the Amstrad PCW, this program will fully utilise the facilities of your computer. It makes an ideal partner for the novice or expert. Features include fast searching/sorting, calculation on fields, definable printing templates, ASCII export, 32 fields, 32,000 records, merging files and much more.

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The Good Software File

These pages provide a comprehensive guide to the Amstrad PCW software. Published in three monthly parts, this time it's the turn of Databases, Educational Software, Communications and Programming Languages. We've set out to cover every important piece of software we could lay our hands on, and to give you enough information to decide whether they are suitable for you.

All software will run on both the 9512 and the 8000 series machines, though the former's daisywheel printer cannot print graphical output.

The selection isn't comprehensive, but the software listed here represents what we think is the best of that currently available.

As well as a brief summary of what they do, the main Plus and Minus points for each program are listed – Pluses have a ▲ by them, Minuses a ▼. Those we think are particularly noteworthy have a corner flash. Have fun window shopping!

Databases

There are broadly two different types of database, and which suits you best depends, of course, on what you want it for.

Firstly there's the simple card index substitute. For many home users, this will be the kind of thing you want – all it does is store your address book or stock items so that you can easily look them up.

A more sophisticated option is the programmable database. With these, in addition to allowing simple card index retrieval there is a command language which allows you to analyse the data on the cards. For example, you could automatically add up the money owed to you by all your customers from Yorkshire. To make best use of this kind of facility, you will need to be able to understand a little programming, although it's not too hard really.

A bit of jargon now. A database is said to consist of records – this is just like a card in a conventional card file, with all someone's details on it. Each record is composed of fields – a field is a single entry on a card, like someone's name, or age, or postcode.

The thing that makes a database special is an index. You might be able to hold your address book as a simple list in a word processor document, but if it gets large then this becomes unwieldy. An index means that the database has worked out which order records should be in, so it can go straight to the one you want without looking at lots of others first.

The field that you use as your index (e.g. someone's surname) is said to be a key field, and can be looked up very fast compared to "non-key" fields. A good database will allow multiple keys, meaning that it can look up data just as fast for a variety of types of information.

Masterfile 8000

£49.95 • Campbell Systems • 0378 77762/3

A specially written PCW version of the successful database sold on other Amstrad computers. It is fully menu controlled, and makes good use of the PCWs special screen and keys. It can deal with up to 8 separate data files at once, so can cope with relational databases. Screen (but not printed output) can be elaborately laid out with boxes, lines etc.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Works fast
- ▲ Wide range of Layout options
- ▲ Handles 'relational' files
- ▲ Plenty of good example files
- ▲ Can do arithmetic calculations within its records
- ▼ Capacity limited by size of M drive – best on an 8512
- ▼ Takes a while to learn all the features

At Last Plus

£39.95 • Rational Solutions • 0566 81511

At Last Plus is a full-featured database that is excellent value for money. It does what Cardbox did, with much better reporting facilities, and can sort too. You can do simple totalling of columns, but not general arithmetic on fields in a record. A good general purpose database.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good screen editing facilities
- ▲ Constants enable insertion of repetitive data
- ▲ Good on storage space - ideal for 8256 owners
- ▲ Handles names and addresses well
- ▼ No arithmetic calculation in fiels
- ▼ Setting up the database is at first confusing
- ▼ Good, but not that good

Cambase II

£49.95 • Cambrian Software • 0766 831878

New version of the old favourite PCW database. Most important change is the Copy Filespec facility. You can set up a new database with potentially more entries than you've made provision for using the information from the original database. You can also change the fields to suit another set-up.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Quick and efficient to use
- ▲ You can set up a database blueprint (Filespec) which you can test thoroughly before entering data
- ▲ Includes powerful features like conditionals, loops, field validation, and specified layouts
- ▲ Simple parts of the program are well covered in the manual
- ▼ Can't use the memory bad news for 8256 users
- ▼ You have to guess how to use the more advanced features
- ▼ Not much room for prompts
- ▼ Tendency to crash occasionally in Filespec

LocoFile

£29.95 Locomotive 0306 740606

The indexed pop-up database that runs from within LocoScript 2 and that goes even further toward turning LocoScript 2 into a completely integrated software package. Unlike most databases empty records take up almost no space on disc. This allows large record cards to be defined even if they won't always be used. Records pop up very quickly without having to exit from your document. Works best when used in conjunction with LocoMail.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very easy to use
- ▲ Unusually efficient use of disc space
- ▲ Can alter existing index - a very powerful feature indeed
- ▲ Automatically upgrades your LocoScript, LocoMail and LocoSpell to version 2.2
- ▲ Sample databases help you get a better feel for the program
- ▲ Very flexible when designed the record format
- ▲ Carries out searches on partial strings - ideal for when dealing with incomplete information

Chibase 3.0

£29.95 Chiasma 06333 60996

The updated version of the 'free format' database. You type in the text, mark the words to be indexed and treat the file as a database. The updated version allows you to import and export ASCII data files and a chain delete option enables you to work your way methodically through the database deleting the records you don't want while keeping those that you do.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good amend, sort and recall features
- ▲ You can edit without a word processor
- ▲ Searches quickly through data
- ▲ Great for storing large amounts of data where the subject matter is variable
- ▲ Useful record template
- ▼ Can't run from M drive

Delta

£99.99 • Compsoft • 04868 25925

Delta is another of the heavyweights, like dBase II and Condor, but unlike them is fully menu driven. Although the screen layouts are fully flexible, there is a default "quick" layout so you don't have to sweat at defining your own. It could use better record indexing facilities. Particularly good for writing applications, once you have ploughed through the large manual.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Records can contain up to 90 fields, plus groups of fields that may be repeated
- ▲ Screen layout can be user defined, or "quick" mode used
- ▲ Single page letter writer provides detailed mail merge
- ▲ Processes can be defined, and run from user defined menus, for ease of use by others
- ▲ Very full, and quite readable, manual
- ▼ Only one field may be used for indexing
- ▼ Very big program – a PCW8256 would be hard pushed
- ▼ Some of the menu operations are unforgiving to errors

Mini Office Professional Plus

£39.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

The Mini Office database retains its original format. It's a pretty standard card index type, similar to First Base. Good range of selection operations and arithmetic on fields. Can sort over a combination of fields and print out a variety of smart layouts, and you can have up to 255 fields. No import or export of data.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easy to use and intuitive
- ▲ Can use the data in the word processor
- ▲ Powerful selection and sort facilities
- ▲ Arithmetic on fields
- ▲ Test print facility lets you check your labels will print okay
- ▲ One command makes global changes
- ▼ Can't import or export data

Pocket InfoStar

£69.50 • MicroPro/DRA • 0386 841181

Consists of two large programs, DataStar and ReportStar (both available independently). DataStar is a conventional database, with screen card layout and indexing. ReportStar then generates the printed output, either from DataStar or CalcStar files. Powerful if you can use them, but the suite is horrifically overcomplicated, and the documentation just incomprehensible.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ DataStar is a quite good database with indexing and calculated fields.
- ▲ "Transaction processing" feature allows cross referencing of data files.
- ▲ Can be integrated with other Pocket products, eg WordStar.
- ▲ Can take up to 255 fields per record
- ▼ Two volume manual set is very badly organised.
- ▼ There are separate programs to run for form design, data entry and reporting.
- ▼ Operation is all by obscure command keys, à la WordStar.

dBase II

£99.00 • Ashton Tate/First Software • 07357 5244

The WordStar of database packages. Recently licensed "cheaply" for Amstrad machines, dBase II is a market leader in business computing. As you would expect, this means it is very powerful but very complex. It has a procedure language to allow you to write programs to manipulate the data, and you can construct index files for really fast access to large databases. If you can make the effort to learn it, it'll serve you well.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Powerful command language for customised programs
- ▲ Indexing facility makes large databases fast to handle
- ▲ Can handle very big databases
- ▲ The data can be fairly easily altered after its entry
- ▼ Manual is daunting (but there are plenty of independent books on the market)
- ▼ Can't easily alter the screen record layout
- ▼ For an expensive package, you still only get 32 fields per record
- ▼ Generally unfriendly unless you have some programming skills

First Base

£29.95 • Minerva • 0392 437756

Billed as a simple database for the first time user, First Base is quite a competent cheap card index. The manual is computer printed, and weak on diagrams which doesn't help things. One weakness is getting printed results out of First Base – either you settle for crude lists, or you have to create a template in LocoScript which is awkward to do. But overall, it's pretty good value for money.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Can alter the index field at any time
- ▲ Simple to use screen editing make data entry easy
- ▲ Good value as a simple card index lookup system
- ▲ Can easily browse through the database picking out a set by hand
- ▼ Manual is badly laid out and generally difficult
- ▼ Producing printed output is awkward

Sagesoft Retrieve

£70 • Sagesoft • 091 2131555

A high-power package that is relatively easy to use with password security if desired, calculations, automatic counting or deletion of sets of records satisfying given conditions. It also has sophisticated sort and select commands, and can change the structure of an existing database. All this is done by a set of commands rather like a programming language. Printed formats are rather limited though and the program insists on using both drives, making use on an 8256 impractical.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easy to use for a powerful package
- ▲ Advanced sorting and selection commands
- ▲ Subsets can be written to files
- ▲ Can count or delete subsets with one command
- ▲ Labelling/mailmerging routines included
- ▲ Can change structure of existing database
- ▼ Impossibly big program for 8256
- ▼ Printed output limited – must use mailmerge

Script2Base/Text2Base

£29.95 each Encyclasoft 0270 811890

Two free-form databases to be used with LocoScript and Protext respectively. Complete rewrites of FT=DB, the beauty of these databases is that you first create all your text on the word processor and import it as an ordinary (non-ASCII) text file into the database. You then mark all the words you want to see indexed as keywords so that you can go on to compile indexes and carry out searches.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very easy to use
- ▲ Allows you to organise your collection of discs like an encyclopaedia
- ▲ Can construct new files made up of selected parts of existing ones
- ▲ Can send any part of a document to the printer on a line-by-line basis
- ▼ No text-editing facilities within the databases themselves
- ▼ Dreadful documentation

Smartcard

£59.95 • Focus Computers • 0272 420109

A conventional card index database which is now the nearest thing available to Cardbox . Small and fast, you can sort the records, index up to three fields and do simple arithmetic in fields. Can't put background text (eg. titles) on records or printouts.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good clear screens
- ▲ Plenty of on screen help
- ▲ Fast and high capacity
- ▲ Easy to use
- ▼ Can't put background text on printed reports
- ▼ No way of exporting data for mailmerge

Magic Filer

£69.95 • Sagesoft • 091 2131555

Magic Filer is not a true database, but is a structured filing system. Information is split into a hierarchy of categories, and tagged with a keyword which is not stored as part of the data. You can browse through the data, but it will get tedious if you find it needs updating regularly. Many applications will find Magic Filer restrictive.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good for browsing through data when you don't really know what's there
- ▲ Data can be declared "read only" to protect it from alteration by other browsers
- ▼ The basic filing system is weird but not wonderful
- ▼ Editing data once in Magic Filer is awkward
- ▼ The documentation is far too brief
- ▼ You can only have one database per disc

Microfile (Sold in The Micro Collection)

£49.95 • Saxon Computing • 0401 50697

Microfile is a well implemented simple database, driven by plenty of menus and on-screen prompts. It's fast and has good screen control, although it has some size restrictions. Microfile comes as part of a software suite, "The Micro Collection", which is good value (Microfile, Microwrite, MicroSpread, Flexilabel and Lock-It)

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ The price includes competent word processing, spread sheet, labelling and encryption programs
- ▲ Plenty of menus and on screen prompting
- ▲ Very flexible formatting for screen layout and printing
- ▲ Numeric fields can be expressions to be calculated
- ▲ Indexing is fast and can be on several fields
- ▼ Maximum number of fields per record is only 20
- ▼ Limited facilities for totalling up fields in a database

Educational

Educational Software is designed as an aid to traditional teaching, not an alternative. Its main use is in re-inforcing traditional learning done elsewhere and providing the stimulus of a different approach. It can also be especially useful in rote learning and improving the speed at which problems can be solved.

Iankey Crash Course

£24.95 • Iansyst • 01-607 0187

A fairly traditional typing tutor, taking you through basic keyboard exercises. There's a lot of explanatory text, which gets in the way second time around. Definitely competent, but a bit boring.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Mostly avoids boring letter drills
- ▲ Very full on-screen information guides you along
- ▲ "Fast" option cuts out some text if it gets repetitive
- ▼ Not particularly imaginative use of graphics
- ▼ It doesn't always ensure that the cursor is properly aligned with the exercise text

2 Fingers Touch Typing

£24.95 • Iansyst • 01-607 0187

Despite its provocative name, a useful typing tutor in that it specifically caters for people who can already get by on keyboards with two fingers. You are gradually introduced to touch typing, so your speed doesn't drop while you learn. Fills a necessary slot in the Typing Tutor market.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Suitable for improving two finger typists without much drop in speed
- ▲ Full on screen instructions
- ▲ Exercise material is interesting text, not letter drills
- ▼ Explanation text is annoyingly verbose in some lessons
- ▼ It doesn't always ensure that the cursor is properly aligned with the exercise text

Giantkiller

£14.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682

A mathematics adventure game loosely based on Jack and the Beanstalk. Lots of intriguing puzzles which should stimulate any student up to GCSE standard. Not the best adventure game ever written but great for making mathematics fun!

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Puzzles plausibly integrated into scenario
- ▲ Progression of game is simple and well defined
- ▲ Puzzles introduce a lot of valid mathematics
- ▼ Program understands only very simple commands
- ▼ Saving a position takes a move – can be fatal
- ▼ Won't be of particular help in exams

Animal Vegetable Mineral World Wise

£14.95 each • Bourne Educational • 0794 523301

Aimed at the younger market, 7-15 year olds. Both these programs work by learning as the child uses them. Think of an object and the computer tries to guess it. If it is wrong, the child is asked for a question which would allow the PCW to be right next time, and it learns.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Can be used as many times as the child's imagination holds out
- ▲ Performance can be analysed by a teacher after a session
- ▲ As you build up a base of objects and questions, they can be saved for reuse
- ▼ It needs a lot of typing, hence a lot of supervision
- ▼ The PCW starts with only two objects known , so it takes time to get going
- ▼ Documentation has hardly been altered from cassette based versions
- ▼ Since it is for young children, more imaginative use of the screen would be nice

Better Spelling

£16.95 • School Software Ltd • 010 353 61 45399

This is a spelling course aimed at the 8 to adult age group. It consists of a series of well organised, short lessons each dealing with one topic, like plurals or which version of there/their/they're to use in a sentence. The use of the PCW screen is rather unimaginative, and doesn't hold your attention.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Well thought out lessons to emphasise particular points
- ▲ Teaches words in a sentence context as well as in isolation
- ▲ Lessons can be picked in any order from a menu
- ▲ Seems to be proof against mischievous key pressing
- ▼ Boring use of the screen doesn't grab interest
- ▼ No instructions come as to how to use the program.

Chemistry • Biology

£22.95 each • School Software • 010 353 61 45399

These two are fairly traditional question-and-answer tests. You are faced with a choice of 10 topics, and then asked 10 or so questions each, where you have to fill in the blank in a statement. There are preamble notes beforehand, and if you get it wrong you are given a clue. Aimed at 12-16 year olds.

PLUSES • MINUSES

software diffusion

Z88 Import Export PCW

Z88 Import/Export, from C Port, allows easy exchange of files between any Amstrad PCW and the Z88.

PipeDream text files can be converted for reading into LocoScript.

A Printer server allows the Z88 to print onto the PCW's printer.

The program is easy to use, and is complete with instructions and a connecting cable.

Available now for £29.95, this utility is indispensable to those who use the PCW and the Z88.

Requires a PCW8256, 8512 or 9512 with the CPS8256 serial interface add-on.

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The program is easy to use and comes complete with a comprehensive manual and demonstration files including real price information going back several years for several shares (inc FT 30 index, British Telecom, Amstrad, Marks & Spencers) so that you can plot graphs straight away.

PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

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Comprehensive fifty page manual. Complete with demonstration account and prices.

AMSTRAD PC, PPC, IBM PC and compatibles £39-95
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Access VISA

▲ Questions would challenge a GCSE pupil well
▲ Preamble notes introduce topics
▼ The fill in the blank questioning style has little flexibility for different answers
▼ No option to add questions for a specialised syllabus
▼ Some careless errors, like incorrect facts and hard to decipher chemical formulae

Micro Maths

£24.95 • LCL • 0491 579345

Supposedly covering 8 to adult ages, this seems an O-level type program, covering topics from calculus to tables. A good implementation on the PCW with proper use of the screen. Questions are picked at random from a pool, so may repeat but never run out. Replies to questions are typed in mathematical notation, like X↑2+3

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ You can pause to use BASIC as a calculator while you think
▲ 'Unlimited' question set
▲ Comes with a 'free' book of AEB O level questions
▲ Good hints and explanations
▼ Questions in a topic repeat occasionally
▼ Some frills, like the clock and beeper, are annoying
▼ No flexibility to add questions for a particular syllabus

Amstat 1,2,3,4,6 and 7

£28 - £40 • SC Coleman Ltd • 0530 415919

A suite of six statistical routines including a business analysis program, forecasting and resource management. Individual prices range from £27.95 to £39.95. Very sophisticated, and perhaps because of that, a little awkward for beginners.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Good range of statistical functions
▲ Good manual
▲ Can produce good quality graphical results
▼ Some editing procedures very long winded
▼ Needs some expertise to use properly
▼ Weak on checking that input data is reasonable.

Yes Chancellor!

£14.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682

Wait! Don't skip over Yes Chancellor! because it calls itself an 'economic simulation' program. Instructive and fun to use, you type in your annual budgets (tax rates, public spending etc.) and see your popularity plunge and the economy crash. Great for economics classes, also an amusing game in itself.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Simple but effective model of the economy
▲ Comes with booklet explaining economic principles
▲ Great for teaching economic and political pragmatism!
▼ Can get boring as a game
▼ You can't adjust the model of the economy, so it can be too simple

Ultimate Quiz

£14.95 David Greenhough Computing 0274 640764

An educational aid for school age children. Two quizzes on a multiple choice format are available on the one disc. The first one is a general knowledge quiz, the second is based on the Highway Code. You can play against a timer and can set the level of difficulty.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Optional noughts and crosses game included with either quizz
▲ Incorporates an editing file for easy updating of questions
▲ It's very versatile up to 8 people can play
▲ Provides hours of general knowledge fun
▲ None of the questions are repeated
▼ Some of the questions are a little esoteric

Supermaths

£16.95 Abacus Software 0689 36293

Specifically designed for the PCW, this program exercises basic numeracy skills in children. Questions are asked in quick fire volleys of ten and cover all four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and so on). Scores are automatically recorded.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Special original Test and Worksheet modes included the latter is ideal for teachers
▲ Very efficient scoring method
▲ Numeracy level is very basic
▲ New version has enhanced screen displays
▼ Some of the questions may start to look familiar after a while

Language Tutors

£19.95 each Kosmos Software 05255 3942/5406

Four programs with identical formats to help you learn French, Italian, Spanish and German. They can be used just as effectively by students of those languages learning English too. Very versatile series of programs and useful adjuncts to conventional language learning.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Can edit the lessons yourself to include new words
▲ Useful self test option
▲ Completely bi lingual packages
▼ Purely for vocabulary learning no grammar lessons
▼ Would have been more useful if they had also included audio cassettes

Maths Mania

£16.95 School Software Ltd 010 353 61 45399

For children between the ages of 8 and 12, this program offers 5 levels of difficulty in multiplication and 2 in division. A very good program for exercising basic numeracy skills and for practising some mental arithmetic.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Program provides a chirpy feedback on the score of the user
▲ Large attractive numbers appear on the screen
▼ Surprisingly enough, no addition or subtraction exercises are provided
▼ Screens could be made more visually exciting for the younger users

Better Maths

£16.95 School Software Ltd 010 353 61 45399

A continuation of Maths Mania for the next age group 12 to 16 year olds. Topics are very varied and cover, among others, statistics, simple interest and algebra. Each topic consists of a series of ten multiple choice questions. At the end of each set, the percentage scored is shown.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Realistic level of difficulty practised
▲ Program makes a first class revision aid

Communications

Communications is one of the glittering areas of computing, gurus would have you believe. It can provide a fascinating hobby for 'hackers', but more importantly it is a valuable business tool.

'Electronic mail' is just what it says: you use your PCW to send messages, which can be documents thousands of words long, to others on the electronic mail system. The best known system of this kind is Telecom Gold, which also allows you to send telexes. Another major system is Prestel, which is more of an information provider – you can read share prices, weather information and other news direct from your phone line.

For any professional service, you pay a registration fee, plus a connection charge – typically around 10p per minute you use the system. Of course, your phone bills are extra. For hobbyists there are also 'Bulletin boards', which are effectively a kind of private electronic mail system run by a system operator (a 'sysop' to those in the know).

To use any service, you will need to buy a modem and an interface. A modem allows you to send computer signals down a phone line, and the interface gets the signals from your PCW to your modem. The pair will set you back £200 or more. Once done, you need some software to allow you to send and receive data, and it is this software reviewed below.

Electronic mail services just send strings of characters to and fro, whereas Prestel is a 'Viewdata' system, meaning it sends pictures and graphics too. Software needs to do more to receive Viewdata graphics, so if you want to use Prestel make sure your software is up to it.

8256UKM7.COM

Public domain (ie. free!)

P.D. software documentation is often poor but this program has an above average document file. UKM7 was written to support ASCII file transfers using error correction and as a dumb terminal either for use over the phone or between two Amstrads. Between two PCW's file transfer is possible at a staggering 31,250 baud which is even faster than PIP! Easy to use for beginners and better than KERMIT, UKM7 provides a cheap and excellent way to communications after you've got fed up with the PCW's MAIL232. 8256UKM7 is available from the Public Domain Special Interest Group, or most bulletin boards supporting the PCW machines.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Cheap! (the price of a phone call)
▲ Easy to use, and helpful menus
▼ Modem7 version of Xmodem error checking supported
▼ Single file and Batch Mode transfers
▼ "Quiet" mode for slightly faster transfers (on-line transfer progress report disabled)
▼ Only ASCII, no Viewdata
▼ You need to find a PD software source (eg. use a modem and MAIL232 software)

Mini Office Professional Plus

£39.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

Thecomms package is as comprehensive as anything else on the market. It can display both ordinary text screens and the 'Viewdata' block graphics used by Prestel. You are offered baud rates from 75 to 9600, separately set for transmit and receive, straight terminal emulation for use with Telecom Gold, and XMODEM and KERMIT file transfer protocols for error-proof transfer of l ong files. Would be well worth the money just by itself – and of course you're getting four other very good programs as well.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Very comprehensive – a genuinely useful comms package
▲ Ordinary text and 'Viewdata' block graphics
▲ Can save setups under names and recall them, so you only need work out your baud rates/parities once
▲ You can set keys to return strings, such as Telecom Gold passwords
▲ Comes preconfigured to use Prestel and Telecom Gold

Chitchat E-Mail/ Viewdata/Combo

Sagesoft • £69.99/£69.99/£99.99 • 091 284 7077

Two communications programs for the 8000 series machines that have been around for a good time now. Most of the features you will need are here: message text editor, preprogramming unattended tasks(if you use a suitable "intelligent" modem), directory of stored numbers, copy to printer, and a very useful connect time clock so you can watch your phone bill climb! E-mail is used for simple text phone links like Telecom Gold, whereas you'll need Viewdata if you want to use Prestel. The Combo pack contains both E-mail and Viewdata.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Good, clear documentation
▲ Easy for first timers to use
▲ Built in text editor for pre-sending message preparation
▲ Pre-definable tasks executable at any preset time if unattended.
▼ No error corrected file transfer (i.e. Xmodem or CRC)

Dialup

£89.99 • PMS Communications • 021-643 7688

Offers both E-mail and Viewdata operations. Very easy to use, and offers an XMODEM transfer protocol unlike Sage ChitChat. If you are buying a modem too there are some cut-price bundled deals to be had, eg. the Miracle Technology WS4000 modem.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Simple to use
▲ Comprehensive file transfer commands, including XMODEM and the increasingly popular KERMIT
▲ Runs from the M drive
▼ Manual is not PCW specific, and the references to 5.25" discs are tedious

COMM+

£86.25 • NewStar • 0277 220573

This single package combines both ASCII and full Viewdata block graphics and Telesoftware downloading. A very powerful command language allows you to look for particular messages coming in and take actions, even while doing other things. Its use is only limited by your programming ability.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very comprehensive and well indexed ringbound manual
- ▲ High quality Viewdata graphics
- ▲ Well presented on-line help menus for use by beginners
- ▲ Autodialler program works with most modems
- ▲ Telesoftware downloading facility, with CRC/Xmodem checking
- ▲ Very powerful command language, doesn't need much programming skill to learn
- ▼ Not recommended for absolute beginners to communications

Programming

Programming languages come as either 'compilers' or 'interpreters' – compilers pre process the program into machine code, so are much faster. The PCW's standard Mallard BASIC and LOGO are both interpreters. Compilers are generally more cumbersome to use than interpreters, but have various benefits for serious programmers.

With language compilers in particular it is difficult to discover whether they are reliable and efficient without spending many weeks working with them, impossible for a brief review. If you use a specialised programming language and have any comments that would help us compile a good software file entry for it, we would be pleased to hear from you.

HiSoft C

£39.95 • HiSoft • 0525 718181

A very good C compiler, fast, produces good compact code. It comes complete with the HiSoft integrated text editor ED80.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Compiles program into ordinary CPM .COM file
- ▲ Produces compact code
- ▲ Fast and inexpensive
- ▲ Comes with integrated text editor
- ▼ No floating point arithmetic

Arnor C

£49.95 • Arnor • 0733 68909

Good compiler with floating point arithmetic, but not as fast or as cheap as HiSoft C.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Excellent integrated text editor
- ▲ Floating point arithmetic
- ▼ Cumbersome to produce .COM files, needs special run time support program
- ▼ HiSoft C is faster and cheaper

MIX C

£29.95 • Advantage • 0242 224340

American C compiler. You can buy a full screen editor with it for £19.95 extra. Also machine code assembler & examples for £8.95 each.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Features an excellent C tutorial
- ▲ Comprehensive implementation and massive manual
- ▼ Not for the newcomer to programming

Pascal 80

£39.95 • Hisoft • 0525 718181

A standard full Pascal compiler that produces compact code, Comes with the ED80 text editor and a stand alone programmers editor.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Well integrated text editor – when you hit a compilation error you are returned to the correct point to edit it
- ▲ Short compilation time, economical on memory
- ▼ Manual makes no attempt to teach you Pascal

Hisoft Forth

£19.95 • Hisoft • 0525 718181

Forth is an unusual language, somewhere between assembler and C. This is one of the few compilers available for the PCW.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Comes with a Forth editor
- ▲ Quick and efficient implementation
- ▼ Manual doesn't teach you Forth

The Vicar

£49 • Iansyst • 01-607 5844

A programming tool for serious programmers. If you have a several-hundred line program held in several files on a disc, you can lose track of which variables are used where. The VICAR produces a concordance listing and other diagnostics, to help you find bugs and maintain the program.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easy to use but still flexible through use of options
- ▲ Amstrad versions all at a special low price
- ▲ Good manual
- ▼ Only of value on large programs
- ▼ Limited value to most PCW users (except BASIC buffs)

Modula 2

£45.00 • Hisoft • 0525 718181

A compiler. Modula-2 is the successor to Pascal, good for large programs requiring separate compilation. complete with text editor.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Full implementation with extensions.
- ▲ Includes libraries of predefined modules
- ▲ WordStar type screen editor included
- ▼ Compilation process is longwinded and not for beginners

CBASIC

£45.00 • Digital Research •0635 35304

The original Basic compiler from Digital Research, and still one of the best for anyone wanting to produce COM files without abandoning their investment in Basic.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easier programming tool than conventional interpreter
- ▲ Very similar to Mallard Basic, so easy to learn
- ▼ No text editor – you need to buy a programmers editor such as ED80, or the public domain VDO25
- ▼ Programs don't necessarily work faster than they would in conventional Basic, sometimes slower

All You Ever ...

£24.95 CP Software 0993 823463

Program is ridiculously entitled All You Ever Wanted To Know About Graphics, the Universe and Everything on the PCW 8256/8512 but were Afraid to Ask. It's for the experienced programmer who needs fast, smoothly flowing and professional looking graphics output. It has a library of machine code routines which you can use in any language from Mallard Basic to machine code.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ You can produce professional standard graphics
- ▲ Demo programs included on the disc
- ▲ Routines are very wide ranging
- ▲ Excellent value for money
- ▲ New routines of latest version concerned with printer control
- ▼ Not recommended for beginners
- ▼ Cumbersome to use from Basic

Pascal/MT

£45 Digital Research 0635 53499

A full implementation of ISO standard DPS/7185 Pascal with a number of extremely powerful additions. Is very good for large complex applications both data processing and system control.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ A very powerful tool for the serious software writer
- ▲ Unlimited program size with modular development and use of overlays
- ▲ Built in assembler
- ▲ Improved string handling (over standard Pascal)
- ▲ Choice of BCD real numbers for commercial/financial use
- ▼ No built in text editor
- ▼ Compiler in general and the manual in particular are not for beginners
- ▼ No graphics

DevPac 80 MKII

£49.95 Hisoft 0525 718181

Version 2 of the PCW hacker's first choice of development system. Substantially upgraded from the original with a new quite powerful debugger, and a Mini Officetstyle main menu from which to run the individual utilities or your own finished programs.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Powerful assembler producing REL or COM files
- ▲ Good hex facility for Basic programmers
- ▼ Text editor antiquated and clumsy
- ▼ Weak monitor

Maxam II

£49.95 (£69.95 incl. C) Arnor 0733 68909

CP/M machine code development system incorporating an editor, assembler and monitor. It will allow you to disassemble any of the memory banks including extra memory on M drive.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very versatile assembly language programming environment
- ▲ Flexible monitor capable of bank switchng, conditional breakpoints and symbolic debugging
- ▲ Tailored to meet all CP/M Plus programming requirements
- ▲ Program can't cope with some undocumented Z80 instructions
- ▲ Program assumes basic familiarity with the Z80 assembly language

NEXT MONTH

The guide continues with the categories of SPEADSHEETS, GRAPHICS and GAMES. The month after that will cover WORD PROCESSORS, ACCOUNTS/ PAYROLL, UTILITY and DTP software, and the month after that it's back to this months topics.

Our intention is to keep publishing the three parts of the guide in rotation, updating it each month to include all new products. If you would like to see other sections of the guide, back issues of 8000 Plus are available at #1.75 each.

Meanwhile, if you are aware of any significant omissions or errors in the File as published, please let us know. We intend to maintain it as THE authoritative guide to PCW software.

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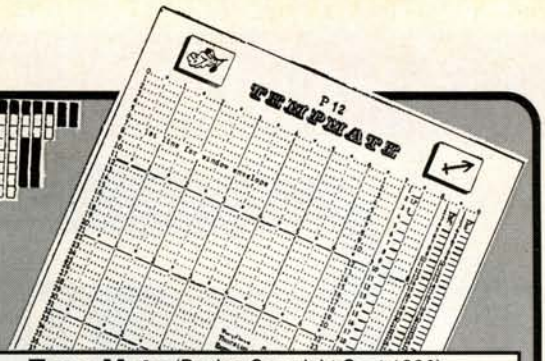

***NEW - FoneMate** - 706K disc. Includes the FoneMate LocoFile for Personal and Business records to merge with many pre-designed LocoMail files that automatically produce label and list options for you. LocoFile of National telephone codes and exchanges with Merge List options. Diary, 5 year calendar, appointment diaries etc. For 8512/9512.

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★ ★ ★ LOCOSCRIPT USERS ★ ★ ★

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"no Locoscripter should be without one" 8000 Plus June '89.

PC Versions of TempDisc with LocoFile features added are expected to be completed in March

TempDisc 8.2 £19.95

A Double Density disc with 133 files (706k) for LocoScript 2. It includes LocoMail* and LocoChar features. All Discs ordered direct are personalised.

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◆ **SOCIAL & SPORTS:** Star signs, family tree, automatic fixture lists*, KO draw and chart*, first day cover*, tickets*, party invitations, league tables, apology for abysmal behaviour at a party, screen-art and d.i.y., New LocoChar Artset.

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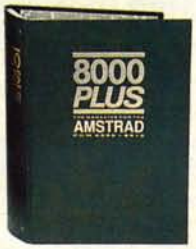

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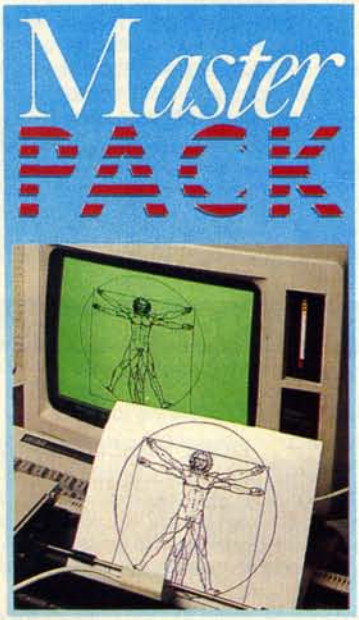

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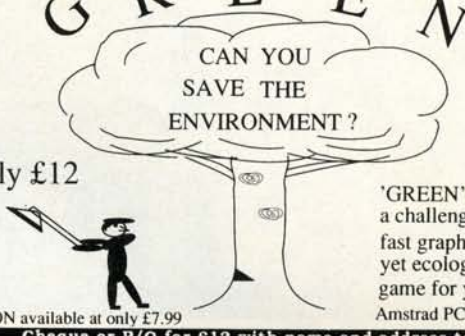

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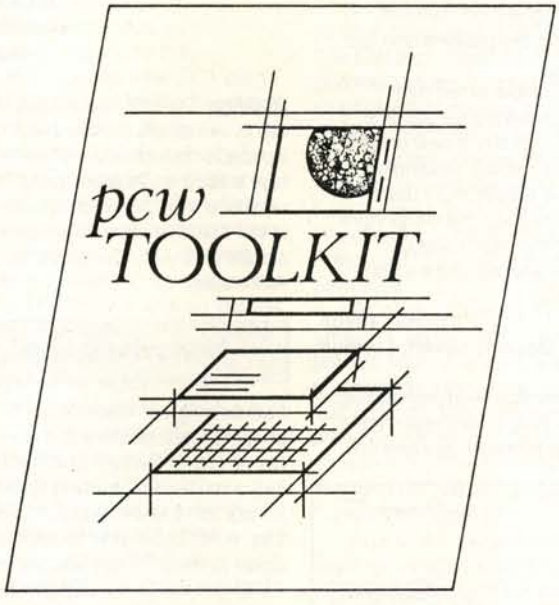

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POST SCRIPT

If you've got praise to pass on, or just some spleen to vent, why not sit right down and write us a letter?

Whether the news is good or bad, we'll publish it; all we ask is that you make it interesting. Plus, if you've got a problem, there's bound to be somebody out there who can help you – even if we can't. So, get typing, and send your missives to 8000 Plus, Postscript, 30 Monmouth Steet, Bath BA1 2AP

Completely blank

The screen-blanking listing you published in the last issue fails to clear the status line at the bottom of the screen, and also makes several unnecessary assignments to variables. For a listing which makes the screen completely blank until a key is pressed, try:

```
10 e$=chr$(27)
20 PRINT e$;"E";e$;"f";e$;"0"
30 WHILE INKEY$=" ": WEND
40 PRINT e$;"e";e$;"1"
```

Alternatively, I can supply an assembled version of the program, which works directly from the A> prompt. It has a number of enhancements, including the occasional warning that it is running (very valuable as an aid to prevent you leaving it on for months on end).

Just send me a formatted disc and £1 for my trouble, and a screen-burn-preventing utility will be on its way to you.

John Filsak
Bulwell
Nottingham

8000 Plus: *A quick thank you must go to everybody else who took the trouble to send in similar listings which remove the 'Drive is A' message from the base line. The amount of mail we received on this subject alone was quite phenomenal. Leaving the PCW switched on indefinitely is obviously becoming very popular practice. Thanks for your letter, John.*

Dietary requirements

I am interested in using a home computer to analyse diet. We had until recently a Commodore 64 and when I made enquiries, I discovered a program called NutriCalc which was designed for Commodores but which was not available for the 64.

Now I am thinking of buying an Amstrad 8256 or 8512 (I haven't decided yet). Can you tell me if this is a program similar to the one I discovered for the Commodore which will work with either of these two models? I would like to find out before purchasing this time if possible.

Betty Whitwell
Barrow-on-Humber

8000 Plus: *An unusual one, this. I'm afraid nobody here – either on 8000 Plus or in the company as a whole – has ever heard of NutriCalc. Can anyone out there help?*

Slip sliding away

With reference to your rather unsympathetic reply to David Murphy of Leicester in your January issue, may I suggest you refer to the advert by WAVE on the previous page where the program in question is advertised as being for the PCW 8000 and at a price of only £8.97 + £1.15 postage. It is also advertised by Data Line Computing Services on page 80 of the same issue, also specifying 8000 only, and at a price of £11.95 including VAT and p & p. Perhaps Postscript should occasionally peruse the adverts in your magazine.

Finally, whilst on the subject, may I thank David for his warning about A to Z Computer Services, and its temerity in asking for a handling fee of 25%. I shall certainly avoid this mean company in future, after all there are plenty of other friendly-sounding businesses advertising in your magazine, most of whom are also interested in providing a genuine service, and at more advantageous prices than this company.

May I offer a warning to your readers who intend to try the tipoff on page 118 of The PCW 8000 Plus Collection headed 'Shampooing your printer.' I tried this method of cleaning the head of my PCW printer with strips of WD40 sprayed on a sheet of paper.

I'm afraid the result was a disaster; I ended up with a roller saturated with oil, and despite two days of cleaning with methylated spirit, while the roller is spotlessly clean, it is so shiny that there is no grip on the paper which just slides about.

Is it possible to remove the roller to restore the surface, or do I have to buy a new one? I have thought about rubbing it with an abrasive eraser, but I don't know how to keep the dross from entering the works. I should appreciate any assistance from your readers.

Norman Dixon
Bounds Green, London

8000 Plus: *Far from being unsympathetic, I was merely trying to warn other readers about making the same – as it turns out, mistaken – assumption that David did. If you are going to have problems with model compatibility, it's more likely to happen with games than with any other kind of software. For that reason, it always pays to pick up the phone and double check that the program is going to work with your PCW 9512 even when the advert states as much. And for each advertiser who specifies model compatibility, there will be another couple who don't. You can never be too sure.*

As for your printer problem, something appears to have gone desperately awry somewhere. It worked fine when we did it. It sounds rather as if you have put too much on. Try slowly turning a sheet of blotting paper through the printer a little at a time. This should absorb the excess oil.

The price of mice

I am interested in Micro Design II from Creative Technology, which you offer for an 8000 Plus price of £89.90 including the AMX mouse.

If I buy this package, can I connect the AMX Mouse to my interface (Pace RS232 Serial and Centronics Parallel Interface) or do I have to buy another one for the mouse?

Another question: is the price £89.90 inclusive or exclusive of VAT? Please tell me the exact amount (with and without the AMX mouse) which I have to pay if I buy this from the Netherlands.

A I Toorop
Middleburg
Holland

8000 Plus: *The AMX mouse is supplied with its own specific interface and that's included in the package so you won't have to buy one. The prices quoted in our special offers pages are inclusive of VAT: £44.95 for Micro Design alone and £89.00 for Micro Design and the AMX mouse.*

Molecular design?

I am an organic chemistry postgraduate student at the University of Salford and I would find a molecular drawing package for my 8512 most useful. However, I have not been able to track one down to date. There are several PCW owners in the department and no-one seems to be able to find such a package.

I have seen them for other systems, the Apple Macintosh mainly, and they seem to take the form of a sort of dedicated desktop publisher with template to represent common fragments of molecules.

I was wondering if you knew if there was such a thing available for

the PCW? And of course it would be ideal if it could handle text from LocoScript as well.

John Heffernan
Salford

8000 Plus: *'Fraid we can't help you with this one. We don't know of any specific molecular drawing packages for any machines. Your best bet will probably be a 3D CAD package for a machine like the Amiga – and that is going to be very expensive. It might be time for a chat with your Head of Department.*

Expanding horizons

I purchased a PCW 8256 soon after it came on the market. This was mainly for use in a domestic situation but also for occasional church and other work. The amount of available memory has always been sufficient but with the advent of additional fonts and packages it is now proving very limiting. Having just purchased LocoFile in order to embark on a datafile catalogue of our 300-400 record collection, I am obviously going to have to do something to improve the memory capacity and I should welcome the benefit of your advice.

I am rather apprehensive about opening up the PCW in order to take out and put in bits myself and in view of its age might this not be a bad idea anyway? Having read as much as possible from your magazine (a regular subscriber since issue 1, incidentally) I came to the conclusion that the new SCA plug-in RAM Pac would be the best way of upgrading, if a bit more expensive than I had originally anticipated. However, on further reflection, would an additional drive deal more easily with putting on to disc the size of datafile I shall be creating in this particular instance?

Would a B drive add-on like the PCW 8512 be sufficient as I would like the opportunity of adding additional fonts together with LocoSpell? I see there is also a plug-in 3©" disc drive unit now available together with the Pace 5®" plug-in drive (how one's horizons rapidly expand!) but this latter would make it rather an expensive catalogue despite perhaps opening up other avenues of use.

If I could rid myself of a few niggling doubts, my preference would be for the SCA RAM Pac which, although a few pounds more expensive than an additional 256K drive, has the virtue of being plug-in and removable for use elsewhere should anything happen to my present PCW. I apologise for the length of this letter but not being a whizz-kid computer user, I would appreciate your opinion as to the best option for me to take.

Mrs Whitefield
Penicuik
Midlothian

8000 Plus: *If you're planning, as you say you are, to use additional fonts as well as LocoSpell, your best bet by far would be to buy the SCA RamPac. Even if you get a second drive for your PCW, it will be equally, if not more, expensive than the RamPac and much slower; you will have to run the programs from disc rather than memory. And, as you have so rightly pointed out, the SCA's RamPac has the added advantage of fast, friendly portability. Good luck!*

Right on time

The way 8000 Plus chooses to ignore the existence of WordStar/NewWord both surprises and enrages me. Having discovered the enormous flexibility of NewWord when I expelled the dreadful Amstrad dot matrix printer and picked up a daisy wheel (long before the 9512 was on the market), and having now installed it to run the brilliant Hewlett Packard Deskjet (to which you might also devote some space), I cannot imagine why you feature only LocoScript and, sometimes, Protext in your articles.

Indeed, were it not for the advertisements, there would be no point in my buying 8000 Plus at all. The fact that I have recently purchased Micro Design II, for example, was entirely due to Creative Technology and RSC Ltd, both of whom stressed that the software is compatible with files from 'LocoScript 2, Protext, WordStar/NewWord, AMX Stop Press and many other popular packages.'

By contrast, your DTP feature (January issue), while it rightly praises Micro Design II and emphasises that it supports 24 pin and laser printers, otherwise only provides the information that 'It accepts LocoScript files as standard but will also deal with Protext files if told to.'

This is not just inadequate. Bearing in mind the fact that WordStar/NewWord is never mentioned by 8000 Plus, it smacks of prejudice.

Roger Dunton
Essex

8000 Plus: *I'm sorry you feel that way. A magazine like ours tries to provide the kind and quantity of information that is going to help the most people at any one time. The fact that most PCW owners are using either LocoScript or Protext on their machines accounts for their habitually strong presence in the magazine. Your letter was quite timely, however; you will have noticed our efforts to redress the balance somewhat – beginning on page 46 – with a feature that looks at all the word processing options open to PCW owners, including WordStar and NewWord.*

Making a dash for it (I)

In your reply to Mr EJF White of Bembridge ('Heavy emphasis', February 1990) you suggested that the fault reported was probably a memory fault. You may be right, especially as a predecessor of yours gave the same reply to a similar problem some three years ago. But, as I told him at the time, I had the same problem with an early 8256, in LocoScript 1, of course.

After the initial panic – it was only the third or fourth time I had had the machine out – I tried everything and eventually discovered that the cause was the printer cable connection not being sufficiently firmly pushed in.

Subsequent manifestations of this unpleasant fault were corrected by a discrete thump on the connector. Permanent cure resulted from the construction of a purpose-made desk and permanent installation of the 8256 (now updated to 8512) which avoids the necessity of remaking the connection each time the machine is used.

You may like to suggest this possibility to Mr White before he indulges in an expensive service.

DL Hawkins
London

Making a dash for it (II)

If EJF White of Bembridge ('Heavy emphasis', February 1990) disconnects and examines the printer connections to his/her PCW 8256, the cause of the double line of dashes running through each line of text will be found.

One of the little pins in the socket will be found to be bent (probably the lowest right). This can be straightened carefully with the tip of a fine screwdriver or penknife – unless it is totally squashed.

The mistake is to attempt to push the plug into the socket 'blind', ie, by putting your hand around the back of the PCW without looking to see what you are doing; the result is a clumsy connection which bends one of the pins.

Dr CM Edmonds
London

8000 Plus: *Thanks to everybody else who 'phoned and wrote in on this subject; while I'm not sure I subscribe heartily to the 'discrete thump' theory afforded by Mr/Ms Hawkins above (it might do more harm than good, especially if the pin is bent), it certainly might be a good idea to check that you've got a sound printer connection if your machine is prone to this problem. A dodgy printer connection will definitely be a lot easier and cheaper to repair than a memory fault.*

Bible aid

In answer to Dr Peter Childs, Limerick, Ireland, we are able to offer the complete King James Version of the Bible on disc.

I was amazed to read the answer given to Mr Childs that the scriptures were available for 'a fee of £60.' We charge User Group members just £2.95 per disc, and with both the Old and New Testaments on 11 discs, our fee is just £32.45.

We know of people regularly using the ASCII files with LocoScript which gives users all the facilities available to that word processor, like FIND/EXCHANGE and CUT/PASTE. But, because the files are supplied in ASCII format, they can be used by any software that is able to import these files.

We are now able to offer the best selection of PCW specific Public Domain software available. We are adding new titles all the time, many are contributed by User Group members. At the last count we have around 80 discs available for the PCW, including tutorials, graphics, programming languages, utilities and more. Anyone wanting a free catalogue should send an SAE to PCW-World, Cotswold House, Cradley Heath, Warley B64 7NF.

While our primary intention is to help User Group members and save them money on their computing purchases, our goods and services are available to everyone.

Gerry Austin
PCW-World

8000 Plus: *It just goes to show that no matter what your problem is, there's almost sure to be someone out there who can help you, even if we can't directly. Thank you to everyone else who 'phoned or wrote in this month to tell us about PCW-World's PD bible software.*

The Reverend Alan A Ford also wrote to tell us about Bibliotec, a new series of software biblical resources for the PCW which is to be released some time in the spring. Apparently, the writers of the software, The National Bible Society of Scotland, have succeeded in 'condensing the whole of the New

Testament into a fraction of its original computer memory space.' See News for more details.

Credit, where credit's due

As a reader of 8000 Plus from issue 1, I have found that it has been of great help to me as a geriatric PCW user. I am a writer and when my US Publishers asked for the next book to be sent to them on disc, I thought, no problem. However, it turned out that they had never heard of Amstrad or LocoScript and had never seen a 3" disc.

In short, I had to convert my files to ASCII and then transfer them to 5 1/4" discs so that they could be dealt with in the US.

In response to many queries and after turning many pages of 8000 Plus, I decided to acquire a third switchable drive for the 8512 and with the aid of a program, 2 in 1, the book has been transferred and the discs are now in the US.

I wish to place on record my warmest thanks to Moonstone Computing who supplied me with the 5 1/4" drive and supply of discs and provided an abundant back-up which took me through the problems which I created for myself. These, of course, could have been reduced if I had read the instructions but, like Rolls Royce used to say, 'If all else fails, read the instructions.'

I would also like to express my appreciation of the help I received from Dave's Disc Doctor Service. I have a drawer full of software which I have never been able to use. Had any of them given me the help and backup I have received from Moonstone and Dave, I am certain that I would be using several of them.

It should be remembered that many of us are in the position of the early motorists and we have a man with a red flag in front of us. Computers and their software still have a long way to go before we get to the stage of getting in the car and turning a key to start.

Geoffrey Boothroyd
Glasgow

***8000* Plus:** *Er, yes; but hope, as they say, springs eternal. Thanks for your letter, Geoffrey. Just as a reminder to those of you with seemingly terminal disc problems, you can contact Dave Smith at 41 Tutsham Way, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6UK on .*

Mix 'n' match

I wonder if you have come across a solution to a question that's been hanging around for a while in the back of my mind – namely, is it possible to connect a 9512 keyboard to an 8000 series machine in order to take advantage of the less cramped layout? Offhand, I can't recall any mention of this subject in the 41 issues I've read of your magazine. Maybe it's impossible – a word that doesn't seem to mean much to your readers – but I doubt it. There must be a way ...

Richard Hayes
Surrey

***8000* Plus:** *Tut, tut, tut: the ways we spend our time. Having just given it a quick shufty, we can now state – quite categorically – that the 9512 keyboard will work with the 8000 machine.*

"JUST AS I HOPED - IT WORKS WITH THIS KEYBOARD AS WELL"

The heat is on

I was very interested to see the letter from Neville Collins in issue 41, February 1990, as I believe I have experienced the same problem. Oddly enough, it is not at night, but on bright sunny mornings that I have several times 'lost' drive B.

I have an 8512 at home and usually work on it in the evenings, during which time the B drive gives no problem. I too have a desk light, but mine is on the side away from the drives. However, I regularly 'lose' my B drive if I have a chance to work at home in the morning and I only get the problem when it is bright and sunny.

There is a large window behind my back, through which sunlight shines directly onto the drives of the computer. Now if I have the presence of mind to rig it up before the sun gets round to the critical angle, a small sheet of whitepaper or card can be taped to hang over the B drive as a sun-shade and work proceeds without the interruption.

If I forget this precaution, the dreaded 'B Drive not ready' message appears when I try to save to disc. So far I have found no alternative to accepting a pause with the drive shaded while the bright sun passes. Retrying the Save operation usually succeeds then. Alternatively, if the problem has arisen while trying to read from a B drive disc, ([f7]) regains access to the B drive, and the good news is that there has never yet been any damage to files on the disc in the drive when this has happened.

Mr Collins wonders if light may be the problem. I had assumed it was heat, with the B drive being able to run only below a certain critical temperature. The black plastic of the drive absorbs heat extremely well. My white paper shield does prevent trouble, but of course it cut out all the light as well as absorbing heat.

If this is a temperature problem, how about making B drives in white plastic, instead of black. If it is light which causes the trouble, then maybe the people who make 'thingis' could create a special little B drive sunshade. I would be very happy to try out any prototypes.

Jonathan Marrow
Wirral
Merseyside

***8000* Plus:** *This subject is fuelling a surprising amount of speculation Have we hit on the real cause this time? Confine your computing to a cold, dark cellar and you can't possibly go wrong.*

Adaptor - bility

I couldn't contain my excitement on reading about the SCA RamPac. Having recently updated to LocoScript II, I've hoped for a way to be able to use Loco-who-knows-what-else without performing brain surgery on my 8256.

However, I have one little problem. The said 8256 is a German import version, and I remember reading somewhere that I will therefore need an adaptor to use outboard peripherals (such as the SCA RamPac). Could you please let me know where I could obtain such an adaptor?

Thanks for two great mags; I read New Computer Express too.

Neil Page
Chesterfield

***8000* Plus:** *You can get hold of one of these adaptors from Silicon City who advertise regularly with the magazine. The only thing is that it will cost you £14.95 everything included. You don't say in your letter where you bought the PCW; if you bought it in the UK, your dealer ought, by rights, to supply you with one free of charge.*

The listening mag

Well, well, well; until I read page 70 of issue 41, I had no idea that if you wanted a program written, then all you had to do was write to Tipoffs and ask!

So I wondered if you might do me a little favour? All I want is a program accessible from a friendly front end so that a complete dunce will be able to use it, that will scan a (possibly infinitely large) data set before going on to perform one of the following statistical procedures: Kalman-Bucy filtering, Gram-Schmidt orthonormalisation, Doob-Meyer decomposition, Cramer-von Mises Model discrimination, reflexive worm identification, and kriging (but only if Doeblin's condition holds).

Ideally, the program will work out for itself which of these procedures is the appropriate one to adopt in a given situation, before going on automatically to process the data accordingly. Also, please can it present the results on screen in a nice flashing box, as well as printing them out, on labels, in bold NLQ LocoScript deco font. Finally, it's got to invent and prove a new theorem that I can name after myself.

I look forward to receiving 8000 Plus's immediate response to this not unreasonable request. Hey, the mag's great, I've been a subscriber for at least seventeen years and I usually buy several extra copies from my local newsagent as well.

Dr Fergus Daly
Department of Statistics
The Open University
Milton Keynes

***8000* Plus:** *I'm afraid we don't believe a word of all that stuff about buying 'several extra copies'. But the program shouldn't present too many problems. Not sure we can manage the deco font though, Dr Daly. Will rococo be all right?*

● Our apologies must go to all of you who are still awaiting personal replies to your letters. We haven't forgotten you, we do read every one, but we're afraid the wait isn't over yet. Due to the protracted search for that elusive third person to join our editorial team, I'm afraid that neither Tim nor myself have the time to stop putting the magazine together so that we can write to you. Please continue to bear with us.

NEW for 1990

Three new discs are available for use with MicroDesign 2, Stop Press and Newsdesk:

Aircraft
(Contains more line drawings by Michael Kay)

Digipic 2
Digipic 3
(More digitized photographs)

All Discs ordered before January 1st 1990 are priced at £11.50

All previous material is still available, SAE for lists. All discs are ~~£12.50~~

58, The Shrublands, HORSFORD, Norfolk, NR10 3EL.
Or telephone Tim on 0603 890195 (24hr Answerphone.)

NEW MODEMS

The Hi-Tec EC2400 Plus is now available, it has four speeds (V22bis, V22, V23, V21 or 2400, 1200, 1275, 300bps), 100% Error correction MNP 4, and 200% Data compression MNP 5, it's fully Hayes compatible with extended AT command set, battery back-up and four new select switch's including a Reset and 13 front panel LEDs. The handbook has been well written and like the modems, professionally presented.

The Hi-Tec EC9600 is soon to be on the market, it's a Five speed modem (V32 or 9600 Including V22bis, V22, V23, V21), 100% Error correction V42, and V42bis thats 300-400% Data Compression, to give a transfer speed in excess of 30,000 bps.

The two new modems have been designed and built in England, but are not yet British Telecom BABT approved. So Hi-Tec is offering a massive 50% discount, making The EC2400 Plus only £299, and the EC9600 £699 Inc VAT, but only until the green stickers arrive.

Their Hi-Tec EC2400 is now British Telecom approved and is available on next day delivery at only £399 + VAT.

Contact: Steve White, Hi-Tec Supplies Co. Tel: 0733-897333

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COMPETITION

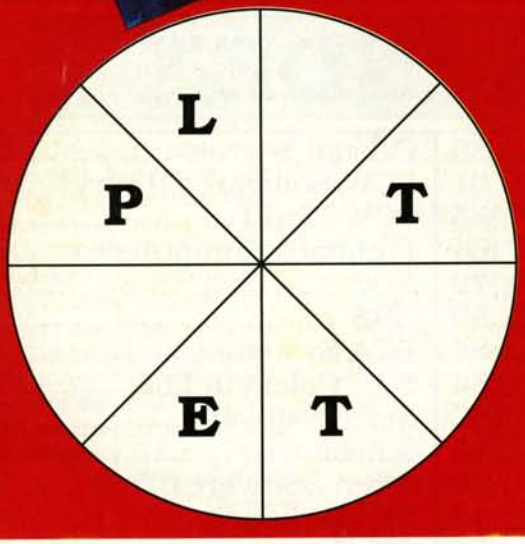
Win this month's competition and you could find yourself up to your neck in it!

It's sink or swim time, folks! A Fish could be finning its way to you this month

If you've read Play for Today on pages 26 and 27, you'll know that Magnetic Scrolls' Fish is sitting very pretty at the top of our PCW games chart. And it's hardly surprising. The graphics are renowned for their excellence (particularly on the 9512), the puzzles are addictive and the story is original in the extreme. How many other games do you know which start off in a goldfish bowl? For that matter, how many games have you played which cast the hero – that's you – as a goldfish, and a pretty cool one at that?

But you're a fish with a mission: namely, bringing the anarchical Seven Deadly Fins to justice. But how can a goldfish – admittedly a cool one – achieve so much single-finned? Well that, as they say in the trade, is for us to know and you to find out.

If you fancy taking the plunge, find the missing letters to complete Thomas Jones' word circle. You should end up with a (roughly) PCW-related word. Stick the finished circle to the back of a postcard and send it in to 8000 Plus, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2AP before 1st March. The three lucky winners will each receive a copy of one of the best PCW games around.



Previous competitions have thrown up pile upon pile of multiple entries. This is a practice to which we take a dim view, to say the least. So, from now on ... no more multiple entries. Fair's fair and may the best man, woman, child or fish win!

Late winners

Last month we got so carried away that we forgot to announce December's prize-winners. Sorry about that everyone. Still, without further ado, our congratulations go to **WK Piper from Maidstone**, **RI Johnson from Surrey** and **DM Evans from Corwen in Clwyd**, to whom copies of Micro Design II will shortly be winging their way. They cleverly spotted the 9 seasonal icons with which Julie liberally peppered the pages of the magazine (or 10, if you count the half-icon on our Postscript cartoon). Well done!

Bath postmen are either undergoing a period of enforced bed-rest or on a go-slow following January's cover-mounted competition. We've been completely snowed under. Due to this quite phenomenal deluge of entries, we'll be holding over the announcement of the winners until next month.

Next month

BASIC Surgery

Geoffrey Childs will be answering all the questions you never dared ask about Mallard BASIC as he exposes once and for all its nooks and crannies. So if you want to get the best out of your favourite programming language, don't miss next month's BASIC surgery.

Standing the test of time

Regular 8000 Plus contributor David Frost reports on what it's like living with the Cirtech Diamond hard disc. Nine months down the line, he will be telling us exactly how it's changed the face of his home-computing. But for better or worse, that's what we want to know.

Fax – the way to do it

Thinking of buying a fax machine? Amstrad have just released their very own model. We'll be pressing all its buttons and tweaking all its knobs to find out just how well it compares to those machines already on the market.

The 9512 rescue kit

8000 Plus will be blowing the cobwebs off the program from Three Inch Software that, for the very first time, succeeded in putting the PCW 8256 and 9512 on an equal footing. So fret no longer: if you've got 3" discs that you would like both PCWs to be able to read, find out more about the software that is able to bridge the gap.

Family fortunes

Calling all would-be genealogists! If you're fed up of looking at old black and white photos unable to work out how who's related to whom, why not use your PCW to get genned up on it all? With the help of our PCW-specific program round-up, unearth the past and discover your ancestors. It will take more than the odd skeleton to put us off – and so say the genealogists who use them.

8000 PLUS

The April issue of 8000 Plus will be on sale from March 22nd. Hurry up and reserve your copy now!

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By popular demand the PCW section has been expanded, and includes the complete *Loco* selection from *File* to *Font*.

Displaying it's usual commitment to be much more than just another software vendor's flog sheet, the all-new *New Star Software Buyers' Guide and Catalogue* is available free of charge - just call/write for your copy.

There are 64 pages describing a complete range of IBM PC (and compatible) software, plus an expanded section covering the best of the PCW software.

Accounts, wordprocessing, database and graphics are all covered.

Check and see if your local software stockist has the ***New Star*** catalogue available - and if not, ask them to get some in, but don't delay before getting your free copy! ❑

NewStar Software: *Original and best*

Over 3 years of supplying software for the PCW user makes *NewStar* probably the most experienced company in the marketplace.

We were there from the launch of the PCW with any CPM software transferred to 3" disk on request; and our classic CPM applications, *Touch 'n'Go*, *NewWord* and *Cracker* are still the best in their respective fiel ds.

Several feature data and skill portability to MSDOS (IBM PC) systems, so skills learned on the PCW can be carried forward with no wasted effort. ❑

Celebratory Offers!

To mark the appearance of our first major new catalogue for over a year, we are giving away a free copy of the *Trivial Pursuit* game, or for the more serious minded user, a copy of the outstanding keyboard trainer, Touch 'n' Go - with each order for £50 worth of PC software, accompanied by a copy of this advert. Offer applies until September 30th 1989. ❑

From PCW to PC, and back again

Included in an expanded PCW catalogue section, is the latest edition of Software Technology's versatile CSTAM: the simple to use serial file transfer utility: available with 3" PCW disk, 3.5" and 5.25" PC disks.

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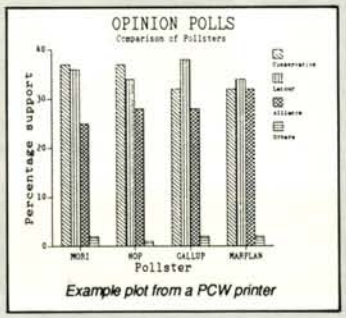

Example plot from a PCW printer

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